

12. Ha *H. G. H.*
THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE

DELINERATED,

In the principal LINES thereof, both as
to its RISE and PROGRESS.

In several practical Discourses:

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. On Sinners finding CHRIST,
finding LIFE. | IV. On PRAYER; the Nature
thereof in general; the SPI-
RIT'S HELP therein; the
Performance thereof in the
NAME OF CHRIST; and
God's HEARING of it. |
| II. On the BELIEVER'S LIFE,
as a going up from the Wil-
derness of this World, to the
heavenly Canaan, leaning up-
on CHRIST. | V. On ACCEPTANCE WITH
God, of Mens Works, as
well as their Persons, freely
in CHRIST. |
| III. On WALKING WITH
God, in its MATTER and
PROPERTIES. | |

By the late Reverend and Learned
MR THOMAS BOSTON,

Author of the Fourfold State, &c. &c.

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M D C C L X X V.



THOUGHTS OF THE CHIEFEST OF THE LIBRARIES OF THE
COUNTRIES OVER WHICH I HAVE TRAVELED.
Now, Sir, I have given you a general view of my travels, and I will now
give you a more particular account of each country, and of the
books which I have seen there. I will begin with France, where I
spent some time, and where I saw many valuable books. I
will then go to Germany, where I saw a great number of
good books, and where I also saw some very fine
old manuscripts. After that, I will go to Italy, where I
saw many fine books, and where I also saw some
very old manuscripts. Finally, I will go to England,
where I saw a great number of good books, and where I
also saw some very fine old manuscripts. This
is all the information I have at present, and I hope
you will find it useful.

Now, Sir, I will give you a more detailed account of my travels, and I will begin with France. I will first speak of Paris, where I spent some time, and where I saw many valuable books. I will then go to the provinces, and I will speak of the libraries of the chief cities, such as Lyon, Marseilles, and Toulouse. After that, I will go to Germany, where I saw a great number of good books, and where I also saw some very fine old manuscripts. Finally, I will go to England, where I saw a great number of good books, and where I also saw some very fine old manuscripts. This is all the information I have at present, and I hope you will find it useful.

P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the character and reputation of the venerable and great man whose name these sermons bear, both as a scholar and a divine, is so well established, as to need no recommendation to such as are acquainted with his other valuable performances, especially from so mean and obscure a hand as mine; yet being desired by his grandson the Rev. Mr Michael Boston of Falkirk, to write something by way of preface to them, the regard I have, and shall always have for his name and memory, makes me the more readily comply with his request.

The acquaintance I had with him, and the frequent opportunities I had of hearing him preach, I look upon as one of the greatest privileges I was favoured with in my early days, and which I still reflect on with great pleasure. He was indeed one of the most powerful preachers of the gospel I ever heard open a mouth. It is true he was no Boanerges as to his voice, his delivery being grave and deliberate, yet there was a majestic energy in it, which together with his venerable and comely aspect, made no small impression to his advantage on the minds of them who had the pleasure of hearing him.

There were few men (if any) in his day who courted popularity less than he did, nay he rather shunned it; but like his shadow it followed him where ever he went: for his ministrations were favourly and acceptable to all who had a relish for the truth as it is in Jesus, and a love to that holiness of heart and life, which the belief of it never fails to influence in the minds of all the children of God.

They who have perused what he published, or prepared for the press in his own lifetime, will see a very great difference between that, and what has been published since his death from his notes prepared only

for the pulpit. Yet even with all the disadvantages that attend posthumous publications, true judges will see a rich vein of thought running through the whole, that in point of propriety and justness will bear the strictest scrutiny. In the original form in which the following discourses now appear, they were highly proper for a popular audience, who constantly attended on his ministry; but he could easily have cast the matter of them into such a form, as would have made them more fit for public use, had his finishing hand been put to them. But that is what cannot be done now; and therefore they are here presented to the reader in the simple unadorned dress in which they were weekly written by the author, for the help of his own memory in delivering them to a plain country congregation. O how highly were they favoured who sat under such a lively searching ministry! Much had they to account for, if they did not improve it in a suitable manner; and I may say, more had they to account for, who wilfully neglected and poured contempt on such a ministry.

Though he usually wrote his sermons as full as he intended to preach them, yet this was not always the case: for some of his sermons printed a good many years ago from his notes, which I myself heard him preach, and took him a full hour to deliver, yet may be read, even deliberately, in near the half of that time. One reason of which is this, the scriptures which he brought as proofs of the points he was handling, are only cited chapter and verse in his notes, and he left several enlargements on them to delivery: for he had a talent peculiar to himself in pointing out the propriety of such proofs; and his more than ordinary critical knowledge of the original languages in which the scriptures were written, enabled him in a brief but comprehensive way, to glance at the meaning of the Spirit of God in them, that was both surprising and edifying to the hearers. Could this

P R E F A C E.

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this have been recovered, it would have added greatly to the beauty of these discourses; but neither this, nor the lively spirited manner in which they were delivered, can be put in print, and set before the reader. But where the scripture-proofs are not inserted at full length, and only chapter and verse cited, if the reader will be at the pains to turn to his Bible, as he goes along in reading, he will find himself amply repaid for his pains, by the satisfaction it will give him; and it will convince him of the justness of what I have now suggested. At the same time it must be observed, that the discourses now offered to the public, are as free of the imperfections incident to posthumous pieces, as any of the author's that have been printed.

To serious Christians of every denomination, whose minds are exercised to godliness, these discourses cannot but be highly acceptable, as they have a direct tendency to lead the mind to the study of practical and experimental religion; a point greatly needed, and alas! too much neglected by the present generation, even of them who profess the name of Christ. All of them are on subjects of the utmost importance, as they in a particular manner relate to what our Lord calls *the one thing needful*, the spiritual, the divine life in the soul: the way how it is begun, maintained, carried on, and perfected in the hearts of all the children of God; making them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. These are subjects that touch the vitals of practical godliness, and therefore deserve the most serious perusal. With which may be very fitly clasped, those discourses of the author, lately published, that are entitled, *The Distinguishing Characters of true Believers, relating to Christian Morality*; wherein the duties, temper, and attainments of the Christian, are delineated with very great precision and perspicuity. From which it will appear, that holiness of life made

a capital part of the author's religious system, and that the charge brought against it by some, that it leads to licentiousness, is ridiculous and absurd.

How sweetly is the duty of prayer handled in these discourses? That necessary duty, which may fitly be called the converse of the soul with the Hearer of prayer; the breath of God breathed into it by the Spirit of grace and supplication, carrying it in the exercise of every grace proper to the duty, back to its divine Original. O blessed are they, who like Moses are admitted to intimate converse with God, and allowed to continue in it, till their faces shine by being made partakers of his holiness, and then (as one well expresses it) " come forth to converse with others as he did, with both the tables of the law in their hands," showing by their spirit and way, that that eternal rule of righteousness is written on the fleshly tables of their hearts by the finger of the living God.

It is pleasant and delightful to observe, how the duty of prayer is dilated and enlarged on in these sermons, by being placed in different points of view, all of them proper to the subject, without any thing of disgusting tautology or repetition; which shows what a rich invention the author had: and I believe he has therein given us a description of his own heart and experience; for he was a man given to prayer. Here I believe we have presented to us many things he himself learned on his knees, when pouring out his heart to God in that duty. Alas, that spirit of prayer, that was poured out so plentifully on many ministers and Christians of the last age, and partly in the beginning of the present too, is in a great measure restrained and withdrawn. The many hours they spent in that duty daily, and on some more solemn occasions, are rather spoken of and wondered at, than imitated: and this may be assigned as one reason why we fall so far short of them in point of Christian experience and holy walking with God.

May

May the sweet matter contained in these evangelical discourses be instrumental in stirring up all who shall peruse them, to a more constant and fervent practice of this duty. It would be a token for good, that the Lord would yet return to us, and leave a blessing behind him, by shining upon his sanctuary, and watering his inheritance when it is weary.

The contents of the second volume, which I am authorized to say are the last of the author's sermons intended for publication, in a particular manner deserve serious consideration, in regard they are for most part on that important and deeply interesting subject, THE OTHER WORLD, and the solemn entrance the soul makes into it at the hour of death. And herein I believe the author has set before us the exercise of his own mind, in viewing the near approach of that hour: for they were among the last sermons he preached, and much about the time of the solemn preparation he made for death mentioned in his Diary. Which shows that he took a particular pleasure in dwelling upon the subject, that he might lead his hearers to the same serious and close thoughts he himself had of it.

It is more than probable, that besides the gradual decay of nature he felt the last two or three years of his life, that he had some secret notice impressed on his mind of his approaching dissolution, which made death and the other world a subject suitable and pleasant to himself, while at the same time it is never unseasonable to any audience whatever.

All natural motions are accelerated and quickest, the nearer they come to their centre; and renewed souls, born from above, who are breathing after the perfection of holiness, and groaning under the burden of a body of sin and death, no wonder than they have a peculiar pleasure in looking forward, and hastening to the happy hour that shall complete their salvation, saying with the church, Song ii. 17. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away: turn, my Beloved,*

loved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of separation.

This would not be so rare an attainment, if there was more of close and accurate walking with God; of which we have a beautiful and particular description in the sermons on that subject in the first volume. In which also I believe we have a delineation of his own walk and practice: for he was not only an able minister of the New Testament, but a holy, tender, accurate Christian, exemplifying what he preached to others; which shewed that his mind was indeed cast into the mould of the gospel.

As to the genuineness of these discourses, they are all printed from the author's own manuscript. And I am advised, that very great care has been taken in comparing them with it, so as to render them as acceptable in that respect as possible.

May the Lord the Spirit, who ministered this precious seed to him the first sower of it in preaching, make it now bread to the eater, who shall peruse it in reading and holy meditation; that it may comfort and strengthen the hearts of the children of God who are travelling to the Zion which is above, where *the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* This is, and shall be the earnest prayer of one who counts it his real honour and glory (though unworthy of it) to be their servant for Jesus sake.

Braintree in Essex,
January 24. 1775.

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

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Christ to be found in the Ordinances,
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The substance of several sermons preached at Etterick,
in the year 1721.

PROVERBS viii. 35.

*For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain
favour of the Lord.*

THIS chapter represents to us Wisdom speaking openly and most earnestly to her hearers. The discourse begins ver. 4. and goes on to the end of the chapter.

It may here be inquired, 1. Who or what is this Wisdom that speaks? I answer, Jesus Christ, the personal Wisdom of God, Luke xi. 49. 1 Cor. i. 24. in both which passages Christ is expressly called *the Wisdom of God*. This appears from the personal properties ascribed to this Wisdom, as, (1.) Subsistence, ver. 30. *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight.* Compare John i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (2.) The manner of subsistence, namely, eternal generation, ver. 22. 23. 24. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water.* (3.) Personal attributes and effects, ver. 14. 15. 16. 17. &c. *Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength, &c.*

It may be inquired, 2. To whom he speaks? I

A - answer,

answer, *To men*, ver. 4. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men : sinful and ruined men, who stand in need of salvation.*

3. It may be inquired, What he speaks? I answer, The sum of it all is to commend himself to their souls, for their eternal happiness, ver. 11. and downwards, *For wisdom is better than rubies ; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it, &c.*

4. What is the application of his discourse? It is an exhortation to hear his voice, comply with it, and close with him, ver. 32. and downwards, *Now therefore hearken unto me, &c.*

In the two last verses is the conclusion of the whole matter.

(1.) Happiness is wrapt up in the enjoyment of him, ver. 35. *For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.*

(2.) Ruin is inevitable in the rejecting of him, ver. 36. *But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul ; all they that hate me, love death.*

The former is the subject of our text; in which consider,

1. The connection with the preceding words, *For*; shewing them to be the reason of the blessedness pronounced on those that *hear him, watching daily at his gates, &c.* These gates are the ordinances. It is supposed that he comes out at these gates, and so men being found watching at them, find him when he is pleased to come forth. It is a metaphor, which may be taken either, (1.) From scholars, whose hearts being set on learning, wait on at the school-door, till they can get in; or, (2.) From courtiers, Esth. ii. 21. or others waiting for access to their prince. (3.) Or from clients waiting on their advocates, or their judges, late and early. Or, (4.) From lovers, who will hang on, watching for a meeting, Job xxxi. 9. They that thus watch and wait at Christ's gates, till he come forth, for getting their errand, are made up for ever. Which is the import of,

2. The

2. The words themselves ; describing the happiness of those that find Christ. Wherein there are two things.

1st, The happy man in Heaven's account, *Who so findeth me.* It imports, that it is not every one that comes to his gates, that finds him ; many go as they came : but some do find him. The world counts him the happy man, that finds riches, honours, pleasures, &c. like Ephraim, who said, *I am become rich, I have found me out substance,* Hos. xii. 8. ; and therefore they watch and wait greedily where they may have them, saying, *Who will shew us any good?* Psal. iv. 6. But when they have found what they were seeking, it often appears, that they have been seeking and have found their own ruin. But he is happy indeed that finds Christ, for he finds an upmaking treasure.

2dly, The happiness of that man ; which lies in two things.

(1.) He that finds Christ, finds life. Without him we are dead men ; but falling on Christ the fountain of life, as the man's dead body on the bones of Elisha, 2 Kings xiii. 21. the soul gets life, eternal life, that will never die out any more. Heb. *Hath found;* in finding me, he hath found life, 1 John v. 12. *He that bath the Son, bath life.*

(2.) He shall obtain favour of the Lord ; for the Father is well pleased with Christ, and with all who are in him. He shall be accepted with the Lord, Eph. i. 6. The sky shall clear on him, which was louring before. Heaven shall smile on him. Yea, he shall bring forth favour from the Lord, as out of a treasure now opened to him ; so the word intimates.

From the connection of the text with the preceding context, we may observe the two following doctrines, viz.

DOCT. I. *The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.*

DOCT. II. *People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.*

I shall discuss these two doctrines before I enter on the words themselves.

DOCT. I. *The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.*

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what are the ordinances in which Christ is to be found.

II. Confirm the doctrine.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. I am to shew what are the ordinances wherein, especially, Christ is to be found. If any of you have Job's desire, Job xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him!* I would direct you to go out by the footsteps of the flock, Cant. i. 8. where to find him. These ordinances are,

1. The divine ordinance of meditation, Hag. i. 5. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* Here is the first sight oft-times that a sinner gets of Christ; as did the prodigal son, Luke xv. 17. *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* Therefore David adviseth his enemies to this, Psal. iv. 4. *Commune with your own heart upon your bed.* And here the saints have often got renewed sights of him, to their souls satisfaction, Psal. lxiii. 5. 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.* What is it that keeps Christ and many sinners asunder, but that really they will not come near this gate of wisdom? They will not think on their case.

2. Christian conference about spiritual matters.
Hence

Hence we read of this being practised in a very declining time, Mal. iii. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another.* This was the gate at which the two disciples found and met with Christ, Luke xxiv. 32. *Did not our heart burn within us, say they, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* As two cold flint-stones struck one upon another produce fire; so doth spiritual conference sometimes warm cold hearts, Cant. v. 8. 9. and vi. 1. Meetings for Christian fellowship have been meeting-places with Christ to many; the due consideration whereof, might well encourage and stir up Christians to a more frequent attendance upon them.

3. Singing of the Lord's praises. This is a commanded duty, Eph. v. 18. 19.—*Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.* What made David so frequently to wait on about this gate, but that he knew the King used to come forth that way? Here Paul and Silas got a joyful meeting with Christ even in a prison, Acts xvi. 25. 26. It is pity, that people should treat it as a blind gate, at which they never look for the Lord to come forth. But in the experience of the Lord's people he is to be found there. The heavenly melody sometimes melts hard hearts, elevates drooping souls, and fills them with glowing affection to Christ.

4. Prayer. It is called seeking of God, and is the high way to find him. It has a large promise, Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;* and it has been the gate of heaven to many a soul. It is a four-leaved gate, and at every one of the leaves the King has shewn himself to poor sinners. (1.) Public prayer, at which Lydia got her heart opened, Acts xvi. 13. 14. (2.) Private prayer, whether in one's family, Acts x. 30. or otherwise in society with others

others privately, Acts xii. 12. This social prayer has a large promise made to it, Matth. xviii. 19 *I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* (3.) Secret prayer. Many a soul has found Christ there. There Jacob got the blessing, Gen. xxxii. 24. There Daniel beheld the King in his glory, and obtained favour, Dan. ix. 22. This has many a time made the corner of a barn, bire, or a dike-side, a Bethel, a Peniel; and these are more esteemed than a king's palace, by the children of God. (4.) Ejaculatory prayer. This has many times suddenly opened, to the soul's finding of Christ. So it did with Moses, Exod. xiv. 15. *Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:* and with Nehemiah, chap ii. 4. No wonder they do not find him, that watch not at this gate.

5. The word. This is the most patent door of heaven, at which the King usually comes forth to his attendants, that come to wait on him there. It is a two-leaved gate. (1) The word read, Rev. i. 3. *Blessed is he that readeth.* Augustine hearing a voice, Take up and read, opened Rom. xiii. 12. 13. and was converted. Junius was brought to Christ by reading John i. (2) The word preached, 1 Cor. i. 21.—*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* This is a well of salvation at which three thousand persons at a time drank and lived, Acts ii. 41. The eunuch met with Christ at this gate, where the one, *viz.* hearing the word, opened after the other, *viz.* reading the word; and he found favour with the Lord.

6. Lastly, The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are sealing ordinances, in which many have had sensible communion with Jesus Christ. It is true, the first finding of him is not to be expected here; but though they are not converting, they are confirming ordinances; and as such, happy means of strengthening

strengthening the believer's faith and love, and increasing his acquaintance with Christ.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, consider,

1. The ordinances are by Christ's own appointment the trysting-places, wherein he has promised to be found of those that seek him, Exod. xx. 24. *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* So that coming thither to wait on him, they may expect to find him there. It is the divine appointment put upon them, which is accompanied with a blessing, that gives ground of hope in the case. By this they are,

(1.) Trysting-places for sinners; where they may be convinced, converted, and regenerated, Jam. i. 18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.* These are the pools, where the Spirit troubles the water for the cure of sinners of their deadly soul-diseases. And there Christ and the sinner meet for making up the spiritual match.

(2.) Trysting-places for saints; where they may receive life more abundantly, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. In them he keeps his lower table for the feeding of those to whom he has given life. They are the inns in the way to Immanuel's land; the pools in the way to Zion, the wells of salvation.

2. They are the places wherein his people seek him, who know best where he is to be found. When the spouse had lost sight of her beloved, she goes to the ordinances to seek him, Cant. iii. 2. *I will rise now, says she, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.* And they are the places where his people have found him, and do find him, Cant. vii. 5.—*The King is held in the galleries.* So it is even as natural to them to go to thete duties and ordinances when they would see him, as for a child to seek out the mother, in the place where she is wont to be. And when they find him

him not in one duty, they go to another, till going the little further they find him.

3. They are what the Lord has allowed his people to supply the want of heaven, until they come there: the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, till they get the temple in Canaan. And therefore they must last till then, and no longer, Eph. iv. 11. 12. 13. *And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* When John saw the new Jerusalem, he made that observe on it, Rev. xxi. 22. *I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.* But they could not supply that place, unless Christ were there: but he is there, Matth. xxviii. ult. *Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* Cant. iv. 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

III. Lastly, I come now to apply this doctrine.

USE I. Of reproof. It reproves,

1. Those who slight attendance on ordinances, public, private, or secret. It is much to be lamented, that there are so many who do so, and that so little prevails with many to do it. Ah! Sirs, if ye look on this practice in its true colours, it is a slighting of Christ, and an opportunity of meeting with him. It is a breaking of the appointment which the Son of God has made with you; and if the appointment be broken, must not the busines you have with him stick?

2. Those who will come to ordinances to meet with some that they have worldly busines with. They will come to the church on the Lord's day, because they

they have somebody to meet with there, perhaps a servant to bespeak, &c. This is a grossly profane abuse of the ordinances of the Lord ; a turning of that which Christ appointed for the service of your souls, to the service of your lusts ; a turning of that which is appointed for your eternal interest, into your carnal interests. What will these say, when Christ rises up to plead with them at the great day ? when they shall hear, that his being to be found there, could not bring them there ; but they would go for fellow-worms, to transact business with them ?

3. Those who come to ordinances, but seek not to find Christ there ; of such the Lord speaks, Is. xxix. 13.—*This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* How many go to prayers, sermons, &c. who have it not in their view to meet with Christ in them ? So they come away without him, and they do not mourn because they find him not : and how can they be so affected, since it was not their errand to meet with him ?

4. Those who stand in the way of others attending on ordinances. The effect of this is to keep them out of Christ's way, and to hinder their keeping appointment with the Son of God : by which they become answerable for all the damage that there-upon ensues to the souls of such, Luke xi. 52. *Wo unto you, lawyers ! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge : ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.*

USE II. Seek Christ in ordinances, and come to them with a design to find Christ there. When ye go to read the word, to secret duties, or family-duties, or public ordinances, think with yourselves, “ I am going to Wisdom's gates, O shall I not see “ the King's face ? find the smell of his garments, “ get some communion with Christ ? ” When Mary missed him in his grave, she could not be satisfied with a vision of angels, but wept on, till she found him,

him, John xx. 11.—16. O that there were such a heart in us! For motives to enforce this exhortation, consider,

1. He is well worth the seeking. *He that findeth Christ, findeth life.* If his transcendent beauty, and peerless excellencies were known, we could not but seek him, till we had found him, John iv. 10. *If thou knewest the gift of God, says Christ to the woman of Samaria, and who it is that faith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* They that find him are made up for time and eternity. When ye come to ordinances, know ye where ye are? Ye are upon a beautiful field, and it may be your own. Ye see the surface of it, but know ye what is in the bowels of it? A treasure, and Christ is that treasure, Matth. xiii. 44. The ordinances are the earthen vessels, but there is a treasure in them, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

2. That is what the people of God have been seeking and are intent upon in ordinances, in all ages, however careless the blind world has been about it. And they sought always again, because they had once found; they still desired to drink of that fountain, after they had once tasted of it. Hence says David, Psal. xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.* Psal. lxiii. 2. *My flesh longeth for thee—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* When Jacob found himself engaged with Christ, how intent was he? Gen. xxxii. 24. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* This has made them follow ordinances to the fields and the mountains, at the hazard of their lives by persecutors: and they thought all hardships little enough, to find Christ in them.

3. What avail ordinances, if ye do not find Christ in them? Upon this consideration, we should take Moses's protestation before we go to them, Exod. xxxiii.

xxxiii. 15. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* They are but empty husks without him, and cannot feed the soul : he is the marrow and sap of them, John vi. 63. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* Mary met with a disappointment, when she saw two angels in the sepulchre, but Christ himself was away. Should the man that has a petition for life, be brought before the chair of state, but his prince not in it ; would he not say, “ Alas ! it is the King alone himself that “ can do my busines :” So here, when the soul seeks Christ, ordinances alone will not satisfy it ; no, the man wants to enjoy Christ in them, as he alone is suited to his case.

4. *Lastly,* It is a great pity ye should not meet, when the parties have come so far on the appointment. And,

(1.) Most of you come hither from a considerable distance : it is pity ye should forget your errand when ye are come. Ye come too far for nothing : the pains and toil of waiting on ordinances, I think, should even stir you up to think with yourselves, “ What “ am I at this pains for ? what am I seeking ? shall “ I make nothing for my soul by it ?”

(2.) But Christ came farther for it than any of you to keep this appointment, and it cost him infinitely dearer than it does any of you. It cost him a long journey from heaven to earth ; to sweat drops of blood, and to lose his precious life on a cross ; ere there could be a possibility of your meeting with him in ordinances. And now when he is come, shall the meeting misgive betwixt him and your souls ? But I must proceed to consider,

Doct. II. *People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.* One may be found at Christ’s palace gates, and yet never see the King come forth ; as Absalom did in another case.

Here

12. *Why People may come to Ordinances,*

Here I shall give the reasons why it is so, and then apply the point.

I. I am to offer some reasons why sinners may come to ordinances, and not find Christ. And these are all on the sinner's side.

1. Some have no design of finding Christ in ordinances at all: they have no such thing as a meeting with Christ before their eyes. But the Sabbath-day is an idle day, and they will go to the church, and see and be seen, If. i. 12. May be they like to hear the preaching, as they would like a lovely song to divert them. But for a Christ in the preaching, a Saviour for their lost souls, manifested therein; that is what never comes in their head. They are like Ezekiel's hearers, of whom the Lord says, chap. xxxiii. 31. 32. *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that bath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*

2. Many are very indifferent whether they find Christ in ordinances or not. And by their indifference they even court a denial from the King. They are not at pains to tryst with him, in earnest, before they come to public ordinances. They do not prepare for the meeting, by casting down the idols of jealousy, 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2. Their spirits are very flat, and their desires languid when at ordinances; they are not *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* They stand at the palace-gate, but they do not ask, seek, and knock, Matth. vii. 7. and go their way contented, though they do not find him.

3. Some desire not to see him at all, Job xxi. 14. *they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; they are well content he shew*

shew not himself to them. If his harbingers which go before him, namely, convictions of guilt and danger, once begin to appear, they quickly shut their eyes, and will be very desirous to get out of their way. They have no heart for the match with the Lord of glory, and so care not for coming to a treaty about it.

4. *Lately*, Some who may have desires of meeting with Christ, yet cannot away with on-waiting at the gates, and going about from one gate to another, till they find him. We are naturally addicted to unbelieving haste, John vii. 6. If the Lord do not keep our time which we set, we conclude he will never come, Psal. cxvi. 11. But faith is a waiting grace, and sets no time, but persists in that exercise, Is. xxviii. 16. Lam. iii. 49. 50. Now the King, to try of what metal people's desires after him are, delays long his coming forth: and by the time that he comes, as it were, the throng is away from about the palace-gate, and there remains only here and there one, whom the grace of God has endued with a principle of on-waiting. And O how heavy is it to think, that some who have gone far to find Christ, have lost him for not going a little farther! Some have waited long, and have lost him for not waiting but a little longer. The Israelites waited for Moses till the thirty-ninth day; had they but waited the fortieth day, they would not have made and worshipped the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 5. Saul waited for Samuel till the seventh day; had he waited a few hours longer, he had not offered sacrifices unwarrantably, and been stript of his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 8. &c.

I shall now make some short improvement of this point.

Seek Christ so in ordinances, as ye may find him. That is,

1. Seek him *sincerely* and *uprightly* with all your heart, Deut. iv. 29. They are blessed that so seek

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him,

him, Psal. cxix. 2. Seeking from the teeth outward, may prevail with those who know not mens hearts; but not with him, who knows the language of the heart, without an interpreter. It is true, in a way of sovereignty, he may be found of those that seek him not, Is. lxv. 1. and love may make a net for a false heart: but who can promise on that?

2. Seek him *honestly* and *generously* for himself, Psal. cv. 4. Ye hear of his glorious matchless excellencies, let your hearts be caught in the net of his love. And let not his benefits be your only or main inducement, like those mentioned John vi. 26. of whom our Lord says, *Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled;* for that casts contempt on his person. Sovereignty sometimes comes over this indeed, as in the case of Zaccheus.

3. Seek him *fervently*, Rom. xii. 11. How fervent was the Psalmist's heart, Psal. xlvi. 1. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* Psal. Ixiii. 1. 2. *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* Drowsy desires and lazy wishes will not find him out, Cant. iii. 1. 2. Be warm and importunate in your addresses, and the King will come forth at length, Luke xviii. 7.

4. Seek him *humbly*, Psal. x. 17. The woman of Canaan is a noble instance of a humble seeker, Matth. xv. 23. &c. Beggars must not be chusers. Humility teaches to be thankful for a crumb, for a passing view of the King.

5. Seek him *diligently*, Heb. xi. 6. Careless seekers can hardly look to be finders. Seek diligently, as the spouse on considering her case did, leaving no corner of the city untouched, that she might find him, Cant.

Cant. iii. 2. ; as those who are searching for hidden treasure, Prov. ii. 4. 5.

6. Seek him *mournfully*, Luke ii. 48. Mary did so, and found him, John xx. 11. &c. and Jacob also, Hos. xii. 4. When he withdraws, were one mourning for the want, it would be a hopeful sign. Lament after the Lord : there is good reason for it at this day.

7. *Lastly*, Seek him *constantly*, till ye find him, therein imitating the example of the church, Lam. iii. 49. 50. *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission : till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* Be resolute not to give over till ye have met with him, and be sure ye will not be disappointed in the end.

I come now to the words themselves. The happy man is he that findeth Christ. Finding of Christ is the upmaking of the soul, it is man's happiness ; no wonder it be a big thing, comprehending much. I take it up in these two. (1.) A faying discovery of Christ made to the soul : so the word is used, Matth. xiii. 46. in the case of finding the pearl. (2.) An interest in him, yea, actual possession of him, as one's own obtained. So in our text, *findeth life*, i. e. really gets life. So they find him, who get such a discovery of him, as terminates in their closing with him, whereby he is theirs, and they are his.

The following doctrines offer themselves from the words now and formerly explained.

Doct. I. *Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith.*

Doct. II. *Sinners finding Christ, find life.*

I shall handle each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. *Then do people find Christ, when, upon a
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saving*

saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith. This I shall explain and apply.

In explaining the doctrine, I shall,

I. Offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ.

II. More particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ.

I. I am to offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ. And,

1. There is a twofold finding of him; initial, and progressive.

1st, There is an *initial* finding of Christ, which is the soul's first finding of him, the first meeting betwixt Christ and the soul, Matth. xiii. 45. 40. when the dead soul meets with the life giving Saviour. Upon this our salvation depends.

2dly, There is a *progressive* finding of him, which is a child of God's finding of him in the progress of his state of grace, Matth. vii. 7. Thus the spouse found him, Cant. iii. 4. after some partial withdrawing from her.

The difference betwixt these two lies in this, that the immediate effect of the former is union, of the other, actual communion with Christ. The one is the marriage with Christ, the other the return of the husband to his deserted spouse. The text, I think, comprehends both; but the first mainly; compare ver. *ult.* And both consist of a discovery of Christ, and a receiving him; the latter as well as the former; the one initial, the other progressive. It is the first of these I intend.

2. There are some things to be observed touching this finding of Christ.

1st, Sinners in their natural state have lost God, Eph. ii. 12. God is not their God, they have no saving interest in him. There was a covenant of friendship betwixt God and innocent man: but, alas! that covenant was broken, and man quite lost his

his friend, his God. So he goes up and down the world, in his natural state, a poor friendless creature.

2dly, Man is a seeking creature: for he cannot miss to know that he wants, nor to desire to have his wants supplied, Matth. xiii. 45. He goes through the creation, seeking something to satisfy his heart. And when one will not do, he goes to another. The soul of man, though in its blindness it knows not what it would be at, is still seeking; like a nest of young birds still gaping for meat from the dam..

3dly, There is no rest for, nor satisfying of the soul till it come to God. This is not from any desire the soul has of God while in its natural state; but ariseth from the natural make of it, whereby it comes to pass, that nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Therefore the natural man is represented as one ever labouring, but never able to get rest, Matth. xi. 28. If. lv. 1. 2. And its life is a wandering and seeking without intermission, Matth. xiii. 45. 46.

4thly, God is in Christ, to be found in him, and in him only, 2 Cor. v. 19. Col. ii. 9. As the Israelites, who wandered forty years in the wilderness, had a tabernacle set up among them, where they might find God, which was called (Heb.) *the tabernacle of meeting*; so Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle of meeting betwixt God and sinners; and he is no where else to be found. So that till the soul fall on Christ in its weary search, it can never come to God, nor to true rest.

II I shall more particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ. There are two things in it.

First, The soul savinely discovers and discerns Jesus Christ, by a new light let into it, John xvii. 3. There is a twofold discovery of Christ. (1.) An objective discovery of him in the gospel, given to all who hear it. Thus the sun's light discovers all things in the presence of the blind man, but alas! he cannot

perceive them for all that. (2) A *subjective* discovery, when the eyes of the understanding are opened to see what is so discovered, Acts xxvi. 18. If. xxxiii. 17. This is the finding of Christ, in respect of which the sinner is like Hagar near the well, Gen. xxi. 19. Jefus Christ is near the man, Rom. x. 8. but he sees him not, so still he wants him, till, the Lord opening his eyes, he discerns Christ, and so finds him. The soul then beholds him in a twofold glory.

1. The glory of his *person*, as God-man; an admirable person, a nonsuch, *the chief among ten thousand*, Cant. v. 10. The soul finding Christ, beholds him as the Father's fellow, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. in respect of his divine nature; and as our kinsman, and the glory of mankind, in respect of his human nature; the flower of Adam's posterity, *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*.

2. The glory of his *mediatory office*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. The soul gets a sight of him, as the great Dayman betwixt God and sinners, fit to lay his hand upon both parties. It beholds him as the tabernacle of meeting, where God meets with the sinner to make up the peace; as that noble Personage appointed of the Father the repairer of the breach made by sin; the great Surety and Cautioner for sinners debt and God's glory. And there are six things the soul now sees in Christ.

(1.) A transcendent *excellency*, beauty, and loveliness in him, If. xxxiii. 17. Cant. v. ult. It sees him lovely in his natures, in his offices, in his holy life, and in his bloody death; lovely in himself, and in his purchase. It is a too common question that the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse, Cant. v. 9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* The world sees no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired; they see more beauty in carnal worldly objects, than in the Plant of Renown. But no sooner

er does the soul find him, but it sees him lovely above all persons and things. His discovered excellency darkens all created glory, as the sun arising darkens the candle-light, and makes the stars hide their heads, Matth. xiii. 45 46.

(2) A fulness in him, for the supply of all its wants, Col i. 19. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* There is, (1.) A fulness of the Godhead in him, Col. ii 9. The soul that has lost God, finding him, finds God in him, John xiv. 11. (2.) A fulness of merit, for our justification, and a title to heaven. (3.) A fulness of Spirit, for our sanctification, and making us meet for heaven. Finding Christ, the soul finds a treasure, for preciousness, abundance, and variety.

(3) A suitableness in him ; and that is twofold.

[1.] A suitableness in Christ to *their own case*, as when a hungry man finds meat, or a naked man cloaths, Rev. iii. 18. The soul of man goes through the creation, seeking a match in whom it may rest ; but it never finds a suitable one till it find Christ. Still the bed is shorter than that it can stretch itself upon it, and the covering narrower than that it can wrap itself in it : but coming to Christ, the soul finds him completely suited to its case ; suited to still and quiet the conscience by his atoning blood, and to satisfy its craving desires by his all-fulness. There appears then a suitableness in every thing in and about him ; in his natures ; in his offices ; in his life and death, resurrection, ascension, &c.

[2.] A suitableness in him to *the glory of God*. The sinner whose eyes are opened, can never expect salvation but in a way suitable to God's perfections, his holiness and justice : and the mystery of Christ appears thus suited, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here at once appears, how justice is satisfied, and the sinner saved ; and God has his glory, and the sinner his salvation together.

(4) The wisdom of God in him, 1 Cor. i. 24.
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The wisdom of God eminently appeared in the creation, and appears every day in the works of providence: but the master-piece of divine wisdom is the mystery of Christ, wherein is the greatest display of the divine perfections, his power, justice, holiness, mercy, love, goodness, and truth, all woven together by infinite wisdom. And there is none that finds Christ, but must say, that that device is one becoming infinite wisdom.

(5.) An ability to save, Heb. vii. 25. When sin appears in its native colours to the awakened conscience, the soul is apt to question, if there be any balm in Gilead for such wounds; if there be any hope of such a case. But when Christ is discovered to the soul, he appears as the *Lord of hosts, mighty to save*: there is merit enough in his blood to wash away the deepest guilt; and efficacy enough in his Spirit to subdue the strongest corruptions.

(6.) Lastly, Willingness to save, and to communicate of his fulness to the needy soul, Heb. iv. 15. 16. The discovery of this was what brought the prodigal son home, Luke xv. 17. and the utter want of it must make the starving soul die in despondency. This is that which of all things awakened sinners have most ado to discern in Christ, if he be willing to save them, to bestow his precious blood to wash such vile wretches as they. But it is discovered in lesser or greater measure to all that find Christ.

Secondly, Upon this discovery of Christ made unto and by the soul, the soul closes with Christ by faith. There is such a connection betwixt these two, that, (1.) None can close with Christ without it, Cant. v. 9. People may love an unseen Christ, but not an unknown Christ. (2.) All that get it close with him, Psal. ix. 10. John iv. 10. For,

1. Such a discovery of Christ is not made to the soul, till it be hunger-bitten, lost in its own eyes, and would be content with a Saviour on any terms, Acts ix. 6. Prov. xxvii. 7. A starving person needs

no other invitation to eat but to see meat; and when Christ is discovered to the soul lost in its own eyes, it will embrace him.

2. The nature of the object speaks for itself, John iv. 10. Christ discovered to the soul is *precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7. and he who once finds the pearl, will gripe at it to make it his own. He is suitable to its case, which likewise ensures the soul's closing with him, as the sick man with the physician, or the captive with the deliverer.

3. It is always attended with a heart-conquering power, Psal. cx. 3. When the Lord opens the eyes in saving illumination, he looses the heart by renewing the will, and so brings the soul to embrace Christ.

I shall now apply this branch of the subject.

USE I. Of information. This shews us,

1 They have never found Christ, nor seen his glory, who have not closed with him, Psal. ix. 10. They who have not matched with Christ, have never yet seen nor known the glorious Bridegroom, John i. 10. 11. For all they have heard of him in the word, or seen of him in the sacraments, they are still unacquainted with him, and he has ever been a veiled beauty to them. A look of him with an illuminated eye of the mind, would have conquered their souls to his love, If. xlvi. 22.

2. They who reject Christ and his way, and think they have reason for so doing, must know that their judgement is not to be regarded; for they are blind men judging of colours. (1) There are some who never made so much as a shew of trial of Christ and his way. They were estranged from God from the womb, and they have held even forward in their course of sin to this day, without changing; and they are making lies of Christ to themselves and others, Psal. lviii. 3. Poor souls, they know no better, they are under soul ruining delusion. If their

eyes

eyes were opened, they would hate what they now love, and love what they now hate, Tit. iii. 3. (2.) There are others, who, after a seeming trial made of Christ and his way, have cast them behind their back, 2 Pet. ii. 22. But neither have they ever got a discovery of him, for as long as they have hung on about Wisdom's gates, 1 Cor. ii. 8. They have got into the outer court, of prayer, the communion-table, a fair blooming profession: but they never got into the inner court, to see the King in his beauty. Let both know, that there is something in religion which they never knew to this day; and while they despise, they despise what they know not. And if they knew what they know not, they would as soon embrace death and hell, and throw away their own life, as do what they do.

3. Ye who have got such a discovery of Christ as has determined you to close with him, ye have found Christ, and happy are ye. All the people of God have not alike sensible enjoyment of Christ, Matth. xvii. 1. 2. nor alike measure of manifestations of him. Neither are their comforts of alike height, more than their downcastings are of alike depth. But that discovery of Christ which terminates in the soul's closing with him, is saving.

USE II. of trial. Hereby ye may try whether ever ye have found Christ or not. We have been long making the fashion of seeking, let us try whether we have come speed or not. If ye have got such a discovery of him, as has terminated in your souls closing with him, ye have found him. And ye may know it by these marks.

Mark 1. If ye have found Christ, ye will value the discovery as a matchless favour, and display of free grace, Matth. xiii. 44. Like as a poor man, travelling through a desert, in want of all things, would value his finding a covered-table and all necessaries: so will the soul that has been seeking rest through the empty creation, and is still disappointed, value

value the discovery of a full Christ made to it, Psal. cxix. 162. Ye will admire free grace in it, and not impute it to your own pains and diligence, that ever ye had any acquaintance with him.

Mark 2. A found Christ will engage your esteem above all other persons and things, 1 Pet. ii. 7. He will be in your eyes *the chief among ten thousand*. The world, and all that is in it, will be but loss and dung in comparison of him, Psal. lxxiii. 25. However low thoughts ye had of him before, the market will be raised now, and the rate ye will put on him will be so high, as the compass of the whole world, nay the compass of mens desires, will not be able to afford an equivalent, an as-good, Prov. viii. 11.

Mark 3. The discovery of Christ in his glory, will shew sin in ugly colours, and fill a soul with self-loathing and abhorrence, Job xlvi. 5. 6. If. vi. 5. Delusion puffeth up, but real manifestations of Christ are humbling. As in the balances, one scale goes up when the other goes down; so the more Christ is exalted in the eyes of a sinner, the more sin and self are depressed. Doves dung and asses heads gave a great price in Samaria, when bread was not to be had: but when it came, they were no more valued. That light will discover the worthlessness even of one's duties, and shew one's own righteousness like a moth-eaten garment, held up before the sun, If. lxiv. 6. and leave one poor in spirit before the Lord.

Mark 4. A found Christ will engage the sinner's heart and affections, loosing the bond betwixt them and other lovers, and dispose the soul to say as If. xxvi. 13. *O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.* There is an overcoming glory in him, which being discerned does infallibly give him the preference, in the heart, to all competitors, Tit. ii. 11. A believing view of his glory fills the heart with desire after him, and love to him above and beyond all other things, If. xxvi. 9. Cant. i. 3. Many a stroke
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the law, perhaps, has given, to break the bonds of iniquity; but still they hold the sinner fast. But when the gospel fire is set on in the soul, and thereby Christ is discovered in his matchless excellency to the soul, these bonds are burnt and melted down.

Mark 5. Christ being found, the sinner parts with all for him, without reserve; and when he has quitted all for him, he thinks he has a good bargain, Matth. xiii. 46. Where any reserve is made, there is no saving discovery of Christ made there, who in his first appearance in the soul saith effectually, *If ye take me, let these go their way.* The soul parts with all sin, (1.) In respect of affection, Rom. vii. 19. (2.) Of voluntary subjection, Rom. vi. 14. (3.) Of allowed residence, Rom. vii. 24. It parts with self too. 1.) Civil self, friends, credit, ease, &c. Luke xiv. 26. Heb. xi. 24. 25. Deut. xxxiii. 9. 2.) Natural self, even life itself is at his disposal. All that a man hath will he give for his life: but one will not give a found Christ for it, Luke xiv. 26. And, 3.) Religious self is parted with, whereby the soul counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii.

Mark 6. A saving discovery of Christ transforms the soul into his image. The sight of the most beautiful object on earth, cannot work a likeness to it on the beholders; but a manifestation of Christ does it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Love breeds likeness, and likeness nourishes love: and none see Christ in his glory, but they love him, and therefore do put on Christ, Rom. xiii. ult. labouring to walk as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. From that moment the soul finds Christ, it commences nonconformist to the world, being transformed, cast into another mould, in respect of nature and actions, Rom. xii. 2. And when at death, the discovery shall be perfect, so will holiness be, 1 John iii. 2.

Mark ult. They that have once had a saving discovery of Christ, will always desire further discoveries
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of him, till they see him as he is, Exod. xxxiii. 18. *Show me thy glory,* will be the language of their hearts. Here we have the Bridegroom's picture as it were in ordinances, in the word; and they who have once seen the beauty of it, will always be desiring more. Paul knew much of Christ, but his eye was not satisfied with seeing, Phil. iii. 10. Christ was the sum of his life, Phil. i. 21. the body of divinity to which he desired to confine his studies, 1 Cor. ii. 2.: for in the knowledge of Christ all religion lies; therefore the learning of Christianity is the *learning of Christ*, Eph. iv. 20. 21.

DOCTR. II. Sinners finding Christ, find life.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ.

II. Confirm the point.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ. They find a treasure who find Christ, a treasure of life. To open it up, I will shew,

1. What life they find who find Christ.

2. What are the qualities of this life.

First, I will shew what life they find who find Christ. It is a life that goes as wide as the death they found in Adam, Rom. v. 15. *For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.* It is a salve proportioned to that sore. The sinner's finding life in Christ implies, that without Christ he is under death, which therefore we shall take along with us. And always the more of Christ, the more life; and the less of Christ, the less life. The sinner then finding Christ, finds,

1. A life of grace, in regeneration, which is a spiritual

ritual quickening of the soul, Eph. ii. 5. *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.* Man in his natural unconverted state is spiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. Adam eating the forbidden fruit, poisoned himself and all his offspring, for it brought immediate death to them: it separated them from God the fountain of life; and so they lie in their natural state, as buried in the grave of sin, void of all life and sense in spiritual things.

But in the day of the soul's finding Christ, the Spirit of Christ enters into it, and quickens it, as Lazarus's soul entering into his body, while Christ stood by his grave. So the dead soul is raised, the dry bones come together, and are made to live. The man is endowed with a new vital principle, putting him in a capacity to move and act graciously, Gal. ii. 20. He is a new creature, as one raised from the dead. There is a new light let into his mind, a new set given to his will, a new regulation made on his affections: all is new, as by a first resurrection.

2. A life of *favour* with God, Psal. xxx. 5. *In his favour is life.* God is Lord of life and death, and we have forfeited our life to him by our rebellions. May not one say then, he is a dead man, who is out of God's favour; and he is secured for life, who enjoys it? A sinner out of Christ is a dead man, in so far as he is dead in law, and the broken law has doomed him to die eternally, Gal. iii. 10. All the fearful threats and curses of the first covenant, are twisted about him as so many cords of death, binding him as a condemned criminal, till the day of execution.

But the sinner finding Christ, the sentence of condemnation is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, Rom. viii. 1. Christ comes into the iron-house, makes a discovery of himself to the sinner in chains, and there the match is made betwixt the Bridegroom and the captive daughter of Zion. The prison-garments are taken off, and the marriage-robe is put on the

the believer, Phil. iii. 9. Then God says, *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom,* Job xxxiii. 24. So the chains of guilt drop off, and the prison-doors are set open to Christ to hand out his spouse by, and the face-covering that was on the condemned is destroyed. Now, who has any thing to say, why the prisoner may not go forth free with her Lord and Husband? Rom. viii. 33. Justice is satisfied, who had the claim against her: the law that laid her up, and kept her bound, has no more to demand, Gal. ii. 20. The debt is paid, the bond is got up, and torn in pieces, Col. ii. 14. The jailor therefore cannot keep her longer, and death which stood before her with a devouring mouth, is swallowed up in victory, If. xxv. 8.

3. A life of new obedience, Rom. vi. 4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* By nature we are quite void of this life, John xv. 5. The soul in its natural state is never idle indeed, but ever working: but then all its works are dead works, Heb. ix. 14. which can never please the living God. The old man has his deeds in them that are out of Christ, and all their deeds are so: their very religious duties are dead works, and in them they are but as walking ghosts. They cannot perform one vital action in a spiritual sense, Gen. vi. 5. Psal. xiv. 3. Tit. i. 15.

But the sinner finding Christ finds newness of life. He is not the man he was. Christ not only brings him out of the grave of his natural state, but he looses all his grave-cloaths of reigning lusts, and sets him a pulling them off, and casting them from him, Col. iii. 8. He gives him change of raiment. The man puts on Christ, personates him, walking as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal, Psal. cxix. 6. his heart is shaped out in breadth and length to the whole law of Christ. It is spiritual; it is a

cluster of vital actions, whereof Christ is the principle, Gal. ii. 20. and the end, Phil. i. 21.

4. A life of *comfort*. *Non vivere sed valere est vita*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. 1 Theſſ. iii. 8. The natural man has the most uncomfortable life in the world. He has no solid ground of comfort, because matters are quite wrong betwixt Heaven and him: he has no actual comfort, but as it were in a dream, when he drinks of the broken cisterns, so as to forget his misery, Job xv. 21.

But the sinner finding Christ finds a life of comfort. He is put into a comfortable state, as reconciled to God, and having his sin pardoned, Psal. xxxii. 1. And if at any time he want comfort, it is not because the ground of it is rased, for that can never be while the everlasting covenant remains, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. but because his eyes are held that he cannot perceive it, like Hagar at the well. And in his deepest sorrows and distreſſes, there is a ſeed of comfort that will ſpring up, Psal. xcvi. 11. *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.*

5. *Lastly, Eternal life*, John xvii. 3. Man in his natural state is a dead man, liable to eternal death in hell. And whoſoever lives and dies in that state, cannot miſſ to perish for ever, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore whenever God opens the sinner's eyes to ſee his own caſe, he ſees he is eternally lost if he get not help, Acts ii. 37.

But the sinner finding Christ finds eternal life, John iii. ult. The ſecond death can have no power over him, from that happy moment. He commences an heir of glory, and heaven's happiness is ſecured to him. Come death when it will, come judgement when it will, his happy ſtate is already determined by the word, and can never be reversed.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what are the qualities of the life which they find who find Christ.

1. It is a *divine life*, Eph. iv. 18. So it is the most excellent

excellent life. The vegetative life, by which our bodies grow, is common to us with the plants of the earth ; the life of sense, with brutes ; the life of reason, with infidels : but this life exalts one to a rank of beings superior to the rest of mankind, namely, into the rank of saints partakers of the divine nature.

2. It is a life of *the whole man*. Sinners out of Christ are but half-alive, and that in the worst half too : while their bodies are alive, their souls are dead within them, 1 Tim. v. 6. But on the soul's finding Christ, the soul is made alive too, and so the whole man lives ; the better part is quickened. And as the dead souls of the wicked will secure the eternal death of their bodies too, death spreading itself from their souls to their bodies ; so the life of the soul will secure the eternal life of the body, life spreading in like manner from the soul to the body, Rom. viii. 11.

3. It is a *pleasant* life, Prov. iii. 17. Sinners are generally prejudiced in the case, as if it were an unpleasant and uncomfortable life : but that is the opinion only of those who are unacquainted with it ; for David could say, Psal. iv. 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* It is true, the pleasure of it is not expressed in the noisy way in which the world expresses theirs : it is a water that runs deeper than to make such a noise as the shallow brooks, and muddy streams of the world's pleasures do. But all the pleasantries of the men of the world, are light as a feather in comparison of the pleasure found in communion with God, the sense of his favour, and the serenity of conscience : by this good token, that these will bear up a man in the greatest distresses, where those others evanish at the blast, Hab. iii. 17.

4. It is a *persevering* life, that can never be lost, Hab. ii. 4.—*The just shall live by his faith.* Compare Heb. x. 38. It is a life that, from the moment it is given, shall never die out for ever, John iv. 14. The life of inherent grace may be very low, but can-

never be lost : one may lose the sense of the life of favour with God, but can never lose the thing itself, John v. 24. They that now lead the most honourable and wealthy life in the world, death will put an end to it : but this life will make its way through death itself, unhurt.

5. *Lastly,* It is a growing life, John x. 10. It is true, the Christian life is not always growing, more than the trees in winter. But it is a life that grows universally, regularly, and proportionably, till it come to its perfection in glory, Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* It buds in regeneration, begins to open in progressive sanctification, and is full spread in glory : but it shall never wither, but be fresh and fragrant through eternity.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, That sinners finding Christ find life, consider,

1. The Mediator, by the Father's appointment, is the immediate receptacle of life for all to whom life is designed by the Father, Col i. 19 ; as the bowl in Zechariah's candlestick received the oil from the two olive-trees, and communicated the same by the pipes to the lamps, Zech iv. 2 3. God seeing all mankind dead in Adam, but having destined the elect number to life, has put life for them all in the Mediator, as in a sure repository, where it cannot be lost, 1 John v. 11. hence the apostle draws the conclusion of our text, ver. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life :* even as he who hath a woman in marriage, hath all that is hers ; so he that hateth Christ, not only hath a right to, but actually hath life, even everlasting life, ver. 13. John v. 24. *He that buys the field hath the treasure in it.*

2. As Adam lost his life, and that of all his posterity, by his losing of God, who is the life and soul of the soul of man, Psal. xxx. 5. in separation of the soul from whom its death lies ; so the sinner finding

Christ

Christ finds God again, and therefore must needs find life. God is in Christ, the fulness of the God-head is in him, Col. ii. 9. and by him the believer comes to God, Heb. vii. 25. for that was the end of his death, *that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. The Father becomes his Father, the Son his Saviour, the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier; for a whole Trinity is made over to the sinner in the covenant, *I am thy God*. So finding Christ, the sinner finds the whole Trinity of persons: how then can he but find life?

3. The sinner finding Christ finds the Spirit of life. This is so certain, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. Not only do the graces of the Spirit dwell in them who have found Christ, but the person of the Spirit, the cause of the other, Rom. viii. 11. This is that which gives them life, preserves it that it cannot be lost, increaseth it, and at length perfects it, John iv. 14. We see many who getting some light touches and common operations of the Spirit, seem to live for a while: but their seeming life wears away by degrees, and they never recover it: why? because not having found Christ, they have not found life, nor the Spirit either. But believers are recovered from their decays, because the Spirit of life still remains with them.

4. The sinner finding Christ, is united to him as a member of his body, Eph. iii. 17. Hence his life secures theirs, John xiv. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also*. They cannot die, as long as he lives, and therefore their life is everlasting. As members of Christ, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, as the principle of their life; and they derive spiritual nourishment from him, as the branches from the vine-stock. Hence it is that the resurrection of their mortal bodies is secured to them, according to Rom. viii. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from*

from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. So that finding Christ, they find everlasting life of soul and body.

5. The sinner finding Christ, finds all the promises of the everlasting covenant, which are all promises of life, as the threatenings of the law are of death, Tit. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 20. ; for the promises are immediately made to Christ, Gal. iii. 16. and in right of him they become ours. Hence *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. Some would reckon themselves made up all their life, if they did find a parcel of bank-bills: but he that finds Christ, finds Heaven's bank-bills, which being presented to God, will get payment of them to the bearer, be who he will, and that such as will make him live happily through the ages of eternity.

6. The sinner finding Christ, finds a satisfactory answer to all the law's demands, which staves him off from life till they be satisfied. (1.) The law demands the debt of perfect obedience, if the sinner will have life, Matth. xix. 17. In Christ this is answered: for *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. (2.) It demands the debt of punishment, for satisfaction of justice for sin done. The answer is, *I am crucified with Christ*, Gal. ii. 20. Thus he has found a complete righteousness, in which the law itself can find no blemish nor defect. Thus the current of death towards the believer is stopt, and the waters of the curse are cried up: and life flows into the soul, and the blessing comes in room of the curse.

7. Lastly, To sum up all in a word, The sinner finding Christ, finds all things necessary to make him happy. See the believer's possessions, what he gets with Christ when he gets him, 1 Cor. iii. 22. 23. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world; or life, or death, or things present, or things to come;*

all

all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* There is a treasure in him, or he is a treasure, and the treasure becomes the believer's, Matth. xiii. 44. There are unsearchable riches in him, and they are all made over to the believer, Eph. iii. 8. Look to the whole of Christ's purchase, what he bought for poor sinners with his blood, and the soul finding Christ finds it all, and may say, It is all mine.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this branch of the text.

USE. I. Of information. This informs us,

i. That the best way for one's security in an evil day, is to have found Christ. This is a day of impending wrath, wherein God is threatening to cause death overflow the nations *. The true way to answer God's call in the dispensation of the day, is to seek Christ, that ye may find him; so shall ye find life.

1st, God is threatening to take away mens substance, the means of life, making the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron †. He has locked up in great measure the pastures of the field, so that the beasts groan under the sins of men. And no wonder, considering the sinful improvement that has been made of their prosperity. But if all should go together, it cannot break the true Christian, who finding Christ has found life, and may say as Hab. iii. 17. 18. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:*

* Referring to the plague which had then broke out in France, and proved very mortal in several places, particularly at Marseilles.

† This refers to a great drought in spring 1721.

yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

2dly, God is threatening to make death ride in triumph among men. He has been sweeping away multitudes abroad; and how can these nations think to escape, nations lying under the fearful guilt of former times, and who have been long busied in filling up their cup to the brim? All ranks in church and state have corrupted their ways; and when we consider the unnatural marriages, and unnatural murders, that have fallen out more than at any time ever I remember, I cannot but take them for presages, that the things which concern this generation are making haste, the hearing of which will make mens ears to tingle. Well, Sirs, happy are they that find Christ; for they shall find life, when death in its most frightful aspect shall seize a God-provoking generation, and make all their courage fail in one moment, never to recover.

2. There is no way to attain to holiness, and acceptable obedience in good works, without finding of Christ, or closing with him upon a saving discovery of him made to the soul. Find what we will, if we find not Christ, we will remain in a state of death: and all the reasons and motives that can be fetched from heaven or hell, will not quicken us; and therefore cannot put us upon the doing of the least good work; *for, says Christ, without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. It is true, that, as, in an earthquake, dead bodies may fly from one place to another, by the force of the commotion, yet still void of life; so an unbeliever, by the fear of punishment and hope of reward, may work, as one for his life; but alas! his works are but dead works still.

3. The true way to holiness is the finding of Jesus Christ: John vi. 28. 29. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* Jesus answered and said unto them, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* If ever

ever ye would be holy, believe; if ye would reach the highway called *the way of holiness*, betake yourselves to him who is *the way, and the truth, and the life*, John xiv. 6. As the dead man (2 Kings xiii. 21.) let down into Elisha's grave, as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, revived, and stood up on his feet; so the dead soul meeting with Christ by participation of his Spirit is quickened. And as a wick put to a burning lamp is lighted, so as immediately they join flames, and burn on; so the soul finding Christ finds life, embraces him, and lives by him and to him.

4. Christ does not set his people to work for life, to procure life to themselves by their own working: he has given them life, a life that will never end, in their union with him, and bids them work from that life. The law or covenant of works says to them who are under it, *Do this, and live*: if ye will have life, work and win it, Matth. xix. 17. But Christ says to the poor tired creature, busy at labour in vain, Come to me that you may have life. And having come and received life, he sets it to work.

5. Faith and obedience are inseparable, John xv. 5. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* Rom. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* The life that sinners find, finding Christ, is without question, for the kind of it, a holy life: and the manner of one's working must needs be of a piece with the manner of one's being. When Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men to herd with the beasts of the field, he lived like the beasts. Men living in sin, walk in it, Col. iii. 7. And those who are blessed with a life that is holy in the nature of it, must needs be holy in their walk; and if that life were perfected, they would be perfectly holy. So where there is no holiness, there is no life, no faith, no union with the holy Jesus. Unholy professors are dead sinners, and will be buried out of sight

fight in the pit: Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

6. Lastly, The one thing we have to seek above all things, for time and eternity, is to find Christ. For whoso findeth him findeth life, for time and eternity. And this is not the work only of the time of our first conversion to God, but the work of our whole lives, 1 Pet. ii. 4 compared with ver. 2. 3. For always the more we find of Christ, we have the more life, and the less of him, the less life. Finding Christ we find all for holiness and happiness. The Jews say, that the 613 precepts of the law are all reduced to this saying, Hab. ii. 4. *The just shall live by his faith.* And the truth is, the sum of the Christian life lies here, Gal. ii. 20.

USE II. Of exhortation. Seek Christ until ye find him, and find life in him and by him. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Man is a seeking creature, Matth. xiii. 45. Sinners out of Christ are as busy seeking as others are, like the watch going as fast when wrong as when right. There is a void within, that would be filled: but the matter is, they go all wrong in their search. They are seeking a rest to their hearts in the creature, and a rest to their consciences in the works of the law: but in neither of these will they find what they seek. Turn ye, sinners, seek Christ; why seek ye the living among the dead? In Christ only is to be found what ye are seeking, rest to the conscience and to the heart.

Mot. 2. Now is the time he is to be found, If. lv. 6. The day will come when he will not be to be found; and so the sinner has no more access to life. Remember the case of the foolish virgins, Matth. xxv. That is a heavy word, Prov. i. 24. 26. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* And how slingy will it then be to think, that the

time

time of seeking Christ was spent in seeking what cannot profit ; and that then all access to him is lost for ever.

Mot. ult. Ye will be made up for ever, if ye find Christ ; and undone, if ye find him not, Prov. viii. 35. 36. If one was taken up all the days of his life, seeking him, and should find him at last, all would be found to be well bestowed, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. And find what we will, if we should find all the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world, it will not compensate the loss of a missed Saviour, Matth xvi. 26. But I will branch out this exhortation in two particulars.

First, Sinners, seek to find Christ, and to find life in him, by getting a saving discovery of him made to your souls. To press seeking of this saving discovery, consider,

Mot. 1. There is no closing with Christ, or believing in him, without a saving discovery of him made to the soul, Psal. ix. 10. John iv. 10. Men may believe in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ. There is an illumination in the knowledge of Christ, that is necessary towards the embracing of him. Without it the wounded soul will pine away in its wounds, not knowing the Physician ; and the sinner in his sins, not knowing the Saviour.

2. All your labour in religion, without this, will be but working in the dark, and labour in vain, John xiv. 6. compared with Eccl. x. 15. What will all attainments in religion avail, without the knowledge of the main thing, i. e. the knowledge of Christ ? Matth. vii. 22. we find some *prophecyng in Christ's name, in his name casting out devils, and in his name doing many wonderful works,* who lose all their pains, because there was no saving acquaintance betwixt Christ and them.

3. The discovery of Christ is the most excellent discovery that men are capable of. Therefore Paul determined

mined to seek after nothing but that, 1 Cor. ii. 2.; he preferred it to all other things, Phil. iii. 8. What though men be ever so well acquainted with the nature of the creation, and can dive into the secret mysteries of nature, with the reasons of the same? if they be unacquainted with Christ, it is but a bewitching vanity, and a gilded ignorance.

The knowledge of Christ appears to be the most noble, if one considers, (1.) The superlative excellency of the object, Col. ii. 9. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* (2.) The way and manner one comes to this knowledge. Not by the light of nature; this cannot discover Christ to a soul: not by mere objective revelation in the word; men may indeed learn much of Christ that way, but may go to hell for it all: but by the light of the Spirit and subjective revelation, Matth. xvi. 16. 17. (3.) The certainty of it, which surpasses all demonstration, Heb. xi. 1. (4.) The usefulness of it. Other knowledge men may have, and perish with it; all the arts and sciences in the world cannot give life to the soul; but this is life, *eternal life* to them that have it, John xvii. 3. Wherefore all other researches are but laborious trifling, unless in so far as they are subservient to this.

4. Christ discovered in his glory will satisfy your souls, and arrest your hearts, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. "Be shut my eyes and ears," saith Luther, "and say, "you know no God out of Christ, none but he that "was in the lap of Mary, and sucked her breasts." What is the reason of the apostacy and backsliding of many, but that they were never brought into this inner-court of religion? If they had, they had been held fast. They had seen in him what is fully commensurate to the desires of a soul, and therefore had no occasion to have gone back unto the world and their lusts. This would be an anchor of the soul, in the midst of temptations, troubles, persecutions, and losses, arising from whatever quarter they

they may; and is the absolutely-best way to fix the heart.

5. Christ is a veiled beauty, an unknown Christ to the most part of the hearers of the gospel, and to all those to whom the Holy Spirit has not given saving illumination, Cant. v. 9. compare John i. 10. Beware he continue not to be so unto you. Seek to get the veil removed, that ye may see that in Christ, which the world left to perish in their iniquity never sees. The leading difference betwixt the wise and the foolish builders, and the wise and the foolish virgins was, the one had an illumination, the other had not.

6. Lastly, Without a saving discovery of Christ, ye perish, John xvii. 3. If. liii. 11. Ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with Christ must needs be fatal to the soul, since he is the only way to the Father, and there is no salvation in any other. It is the great design of the gospel to bring souls acquainted with Jesus Christ; so where that is not reached, the gospel has not its effect; and where the gospel has not a saving effect, the law will take effect to one's condemnation.

I shall give you some directions for obtaining this discovery of Christ.

Dir. 1. Labour to be acquainted with yourselves, your own sinfulness and misery. And for that cause lay your hearts, lives, and state to the rule of the holy law. Conviction leads the way to saving illumination, the knowledge of the disease to that of the Physician, Acts xvi. 30. 31.

2. Seek the discovery of Christ in your attendance on public ordinances, Prov. viii. 34. These are the galleries where the King walks, the latrines by which he shews himself. See Psal. xlv. 8. There is the market where the eye-salve is to be bought of him. There Lydia's heart was opened. It is good to be in Christ's way, as Zaccheus was. And were we looking and longing for a discovery of him there, we would not long want it.

3. Seek the discovery of him in his written word, the scriptures, *for they are they which testify of Christ*, John v. 39. God's word is the great means of illumination, Psal. xix. 8. The psalmist found it to be so by experience, Psal. cxix. 130. *The entrance of thy words giveth light : it giveth understanding unto the simple.* It is the special instrument the Spirit uses for illumination.

4. Seek it earnestly in prayer, Prov. ii 3. 4. 5. When the disciples were together at prayer, the doors being shut, he manifested himself unto them. We are not to expect bodily discoveries of Christ ; if we had them, they would not do our turn ; the Jews saw him so, who believed not on him : but we are to seek a discovery of Christ in the glory of his person and offices, by the Spirit, which alone can be attended with saving effects.

5. *Lafstly*, Whenever the Lord lets in the least beam of heavenly light into your souls, cherish it, though it may be painful by discovering your sin and misery ; make much of it ; after little, more may come, Hos. vi. 3.

Secondly, Seek to find Christ and life in him, by getting an interest in him. The soul then finds Christ, and has life, when it has got a saving interest in him. If you inquire how that interest is got ? It is through faith. God hath given to us eternal life in the free offer of the gospel, and that life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11. Believe the word of the gospel with particular application to yourselves, receive and rest on him fiducially for life, the life of grace and glory, and ye have it. Wherefore come to Christ, that ye may have life. To press this, consider,

Mot. 1. Ye are invited to come to Christ, that ye may get life in and by him, Is. lv. 1. 2. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto*

unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Rev. iii. 20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Here is an invitation to life, let not that complaint be made of you, John v. 40. Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. Consider,

1st, It is an offer the fallen angels never got. When Christ was born, there was good-will towards men, but no sign of it towards fallen angels. Yet they are in themselves a rank of beings superior to mankind, and he owed no more to us than to them. Only his sovereign pleasure made the difference. *How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

2^{dly}, It is an invitation not given to millions in the world, who are sons of Adam as well as we. Many kingdoms and empires in the world lie in darkness and the shadow of death, and no offer of life is made to them: but it is made to you.

3^{dly}, It is the greatest offer that ever was or shall be, that Heaven can give and earth receive, admired by angels, and grudged by devils; and shall it be slighted by men? even an offer of the Son of God, and eternal life in him.

4^{thly}, It is an offer frequently repeated. Now, sinners, Christ is boding himself and eternal life upon you. You have given him many refusals; but he will not yet take your refusal, but continues the offer.

Mot. 2. Christ is very willing to give himself, and eternal life in himself to you, John vi. 37. Consider.

1st, How ample and large the gospel-offer is, excluding none that will come, Is. lv. 1. forecited. Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

2^{dly}, There is no case a sinner can be in, that shall mar his reception with Christ, and partaking of life.

if he will come to Christ, If. i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Manasseh's bloodshed and witchcraft, Paul's blasphemy and persecution, and Mary Magdalene's lewdness, hindered not their getting life in and by Christ. When he was in the world, he raised Lazarus when stinking in the grave, as well as the ruler's daughter newly dead.

3dly, He takes kindly notice of the sinner's first steps towards him: the father met the prodigal son while yet a great way off. See Jer. xxxi. 18. 19. 20. He surprises souls with looks of kindness preventing them, If. lxv. 1. as he did Paul, Zaccheus, and others.

4thly, He is at great pains with sinners to bring them to himself for life. He stands and knocks; by convictions, surprising mercies, rods, and crosses, he says in effect, *Why will ye die?*

Mot. 3. Ye are commanded to come to him, that ye may have life, 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* All the gospel-invitations are commands; so that it is not left to you, whether to come or not; but ye are peremptorily enjoined. Consider,

1st, Ye are creatures, owing obedience to the commands of your Sovereign Lord; and therefore trample not on his gospel-command.

2dly, How highly merciful and reasonable this command is. All God's commandments are most righteous, Psal. cxix. 128. But behold this is an eminently merciful and reasonable one, that the creature should seek the favour of its Creator; that man should be at peace with God; that the poor sinner should go to the rich Saviour, the sick to the Physician, the guilty flee to the city of refuge and live, and the dying soul have recourse to the fountain of life.

life. And all this under the pain of God's displeasure.

3dly, What a mercy it is that there is not a countermand; that when Adam and his offspring fell, God did not forbid them ever to hope for the least grain of mercy; but graciously invites and intreats, yea, and commands them to come and partake of his favour?

4thly, It is such a command, that if it be not obeyed, God has no value for all your other obedience, 1 John iii. 23. John vi. 29.

Mot. 4. Ye need Christ, and ye need life; ye have an absolute need of both. Do ye not need grace, the favour of God, pardon of sin, the light of his countenance, the influences of his Spirit, the manifestations of his love? Without these ye can never be happy, but eternally miserable. O then seek to find Christ, and life in him.

USE. ult. Hereby ye may try whether ye have found Christ or not. The soul yet dead in sin hath not found him; but where there is spiritual life, Christ is found by that soul. How shall one know whether he be spiritually dead or alive? I will offer but three marks.

Mark 1. Spiritual light, not only let into the conscience, but into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6. John viii. 12. And that may be known by these two things.

(1.) The discovery it makes. The light of life shews a man his former darkness, making him say, *Once was I blind, but now I see.* It discovers sin in its sinfulness, not only as dangerous, but as loathsome and abominable; the sinfulness of heart-sins as well as of life-sins; the first movings of sin, as well as of sin ripened by consent or action; the man's own utter inability to help himself, and the need of Christ both for justification, and sanctification; Christ's preciousness, and perfect suitableness to the sinner's case. This is the discovery made by the light of life, or saving illumination, Luke xv. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 7.

(2.) The

(2.) The efficacy it hath on the soul, Matth. iii. 11. There are many who have a great deal of light; but it has no more efficacy on them to bring them from sin to holiness, than painted fire has to burn. But the light of life humbles the soul before God; causes grief for sin and hatred of it, as contrary to God's holy nature and will; a holy despairing of help by ourselves or any other creature; and a betaking one's self to Christ for all, for pardon, and favour with God, for holiness and happiness, Phil. iii. 3.

Mark 2. Where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual sense and feeling. In spiritual death all the senses of the soul (so to speak) are locked up; and they may be at some times very dull in those who are spiritually alive. But it is evident, that in the quickening of the soul they are restored, and never lost again altogether. The eyes of the soul are opened to see God, Christ, sin, the world, and all things that concern the soul, in other colours than formerly. They hear his voice in his word and in his rod, and they discern it from all others, Cant. v. 2. so that their great business is to answer his call. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious; they have the witness in themselves, that there is something in religion more desirable than all the profits and pleasures of the world, 1 John v. 10. They can say from their experience, that all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Psal. xlv. 8. that every thing about Christ is lovely and desirable. The fulness of grace lodged in him, is savoury to them, Cant. i. 3. Their sense of feeling is awakened: the burden of sin they sometime went lightly under, makes them groan now, and long to be rid of it, as ever a poor prisoner was of his chains, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* Every limb of that body is a weight to them. And they are sensible of Christ's goings and comings, his hidings and manifestations of himself, and the power of his grace, Psal. xxxvii. 7. *Lord, by thy favour thou hast*

hast made my mountain to stand strong : thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

Mark 3. Where there is spiritual life, there is a kindly heat and warmth of the same kind. There is a threefold flame kindled in the believer in the day of his being restored to life, though it acts not alike vigorously in all, nor in the same person alike at all times.

(1.) There is a flame of *holy desires*, *Is. xxvi. 9.* They have longing desires after righteousness, both imputed and implanted, *Matth. v. 6.*; they are set for the one as well as the other. They have ardent desires after communion with God in Christ, *Psal. xlvi. 1.* Hence the secret cries of the soul, *O that I knew where I might find him! O when wilt thou come unto me!*

(2.) There is a flame of *love* to Christ, *Rom. v. 5.* They love him above all persons and things, *Luke xiv. 26.* They love his truths, his whole word; his commands, though striking against their corruptions, *Rom. vii. 22.*; his promises, as the sweetest cordials to a soul fainting under the apprehensions of wrath, or prevailing of corruption; the threatenings of his word, approving them heartily as most just, *Rom. vii. 12.* Their hearts warm to any in whom God's image appears, and that because of that image, *1 John iii. 14.* They love his ordinances, *Psal. lxxxiv. 1.* because they are his institutions, and the appointed means of communion with him.

(3.) There is a flame of *zeal* for Christ, *Psal. lxix. 9.* They are concerned for his honour in the world, the thriving of his kingdom. It vents itself in indignation against sin in themselves and others, because of the dishonour it reflects on Christ, *2 Cor. vii. 11.* in endeavouring to be active for God in their station, and grieving for the ills which they cannot help, saying with David, *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law*, *Psal. cxix. 136.*

Sinners interested in Christ, obtaining favour of the Lord.

PROVERBS viii. 35.

Who so findeth me,—shall obtain favour of the Lord.

BY the favour of the Lord is not meant reconciliation, or a state of favour with God, for that is comprehended in the life found; but the benefits, fruits, and effects of God's favour, all along from the time the sinner is taken into favour. The word rendered *obtain*, signifies to bring forth as out of a treasure or storehouse. This treasure is opened to the sinner, and access to it granted him, upon his union with Christ, so that from thence he may afterwards bring forth as he needs.

The doctrine deducible from the words is,

DOCT. *A sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord, bringing it forth as out of a treasure to which he is allowed access.*

In handling this point, I shall,

I. Shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

II. Wherein the soul once interested in Christ shall obtain favour of the Lord.

III. Confirm the doctrine,

IV. Apply.

I. I will shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

1. There is a treasure of favour for poor sinners with the Lord, Matth. xiii. 44. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, &c.* A treasure speaks preciousness, variety, and abundance.

God's

God's favours are precious, because of his infinite excellency ; there is a variety of them, suited to all the cases the sinner can be in ; and there is abundance of them, an inexhaustible stock, sufficient to supply them all, and that at all times.

2. This treasure is locked on sinners out of Christ, they have no access to it, *being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,* Eph. ii. 12. There is favour with God, but it is not for such sinners : the treasure of wrath is their treasure, Rom. ii. 5. They have no saving interest in the Mediator, therefore no saving interest in the treasure of favour. It is hid in the field of the gospel ; but the field is not theirs, so not the treasure neither.

3. The sinner once interested in Christ has free access to the treasure, to bring forth from thence whatever he needs ; hence says the apostle, Heb. iv. 14. 16. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, —let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* But it may be objected, Is there not a free access to that treasure of favour proclaimed to all to whom the gospel comes ? *Ans.* It is so. But we may conceive, as it were, a twofold door of this treasure ; the outer door, in the free offer of the gospel, the inner door, even Jesus Christ himself. Both are closed on fallen angels : the outer door is opened to sinners of the tribe of Adam, that they may freely partake of it, if they will come in by the inner door ; but till they enter by this last, they cannot reach it. But the sinner once interested in Jesus Christ is put in possession of the treasure, so as to have access to it at any time thereafter, when he is disposed to bring forth favour out of it, John x. 9. *I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

4. Even

4. Even the sinner when he is interested in Christ, will still be needing, while he is in this world. It is true, he will never be again reduced to the extremity of total want, John iv. 14. but he will be under partial wants while he lives here, John xiii. 10. And there is such an emptiness woven into the very nature of the creature, that the saints in heaven, though they will feel no want, yet will not become self-sufficient by glorification.

5. Lastly, As it is the privilege of believers, that they may, so it is their duty that they do, bring forth and fetch supply for all their wants out of that treasure. They must still have recourse to it, in all exigencies; and they are welcome to it. They are let into it, by their union with Christ, and they should make use of it in their daily walk. And when they come to heaven, they shall be filled from it for evermore, Rev. vii. 17. *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

II. I proceed to shew wherein the soul once interested in Christ shall obtain favour of the Lord. They shall obtain it in all things, cases, and conditions, which they meet with or shall be in. The promise is broad and large, Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Rom. viii. 28. *All things shall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Go it as it will with the nation, the church, or themselves in particular, they shall always obtain favour. But it will not be amiss to condescend on some particulars. They shall obtain favour,

1. In prosperity, when things in the world are in a thriving condition with them. That is what destroys many, Prov. i. ult. but it shall not destroy them, and that is a great favour, Job i. 10. *Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house,* and

and about all that he hath on every side? a hedge not only about his house, &c. but about him. Many have the former, while they want the latter, and so are ruined. There is a threefold favour that a gracious person may obtain of the Lord in this case.

(1.) Balancing grace, to make them carry evenly and usefully in prosperity. Job got it in his prosperity, chap i. 5. The sun of prosperity shone on him, and he was helped of God to retain his tenderness, and to improve the smiles of outward providences to the honour of God. And considering what a corrupt nature the best have, and how slippery ground the world's heights are, they obtain favour of the Lord indeed, whom Satan gets not cast over that precipice to their ruin.

(2.) Balancing providences, some such mixture of bitterness in their sweet cup, as keeps them from mis kennen themselves, and makes them sing of mercy and judgement; as the apostle experienced in his own case, 2 Cor. xii. 7. *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.* It is no small favour to the Christian to have some thorn of uneasiness put under him while he is here, to keep him from lying down among the lions dens and mountains of leopards, and sleeping in these dangerous places. Every rub a Christian meets with in his way through the world, is a memorandum for him, that *this is not his rest.* If that do not prevail, there is,

(3.) The change of the course of providence into adversity. Many times that is as great a favour as a Christian can meet with, Zeph. iii. 12. *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.* Sometimes the Christian begins to feather his nest, and lie secure and forgetful of God: but God sets fire to his nest, and he is obliged to look to the God whom he

had forgotten. The world grows a burden to him, and God raises a wind that blows the burden off his back. And he draws away some gilded earth from him, that was drawing his heart from God.

2. In personal outward afflictions, to which the people of God are liable as well as others. O it is a sad case with Christless sinners under affliction! they cry out under their trouble, but they are not bettered by it, Job xxxv. 9. 10. Nay, many are worsted by their afflictions, their spirits are embittered; they have no comfort from earth, and they have none, and apply for none from heaven. But the sinner once interested in Christ shall obtain favour in this case.

(1.) They shall be bettered by it, Rom. viii. 28. foretold. Though they may for a time be fruitless under affliction, and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, yet they shall be brought to themselves, and gain some spiritual advantage thereby. And that is no small favour, to gather figs of such thorns and briers.

(2.) They shall be supported under it, Is. xliii. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* Though with the one hand they be cast down, they shall be held up with the other. They have fatherly pity and sympathy in all their afflictions, Is. lxiii. 9. and in their most hopeless case the everlasting arms are underneath them.

(3.) They shall have deliverance in due time, one way or other, that they shall not perish in their affliction. Though the night be ever so long, the morning cometh; the days of their mourning shall end, Psal. xxxiv. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

3. In desertion. Christ's spouse may be under desertion; the Lord may withdraw and hide himself from those that are dear to him: they may for a time walk in darkness, and see no light, Is. l. 10. go mourning

mourning without the sun, and be so pressed that they cannot contain themselves from crying out, Job xxx. 28. All communication betwixt Heaven and them may seem to be stopt and blocked up, Lam. iii. 8. They may be under fearful terrors from the Lord, Job vi. 4. And this case may be of long continuance with them, as in Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. *I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* But in such a case they shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They shall never be totally deserted or forsaken. Though the husband may withdraw, yet the relation shall never be broken; nor shall they go out of mind with him, though they may apprehend themselves to be forgotten, If. xlix. 14. 15. 16. They shall have now and then some gleam of light in their darkness, and a secret support shall never be wanting, Psal. cxii. 4. Deut. xxxiv. 27.

(2.) They shall not be finally deserted, If. liv. 6. Though he may be gone, he will certainly return. There is a seed of joy sown, which though it lie ever so long under the clod, it cannot rot, it will spring up, Psal. xcvi. 11. And for the spirit of heaviness they shall get the oil of joy. And the ill reports which unbelief has spread concerning a trying hiding God, shall be proved false.

4. In temptation. While they are in the world, they are in the place of snares and temptations. Sometimes public temptations are going, compliance with which being fashionable, it is hard to stand the shock. Private temptations are never wanting from a busy devil, an ensnaring world, and an evil heart. These are means of remediless ruin unto many. But in such a case they shall obtain favour of the Lord. They shall either,

(1.) Be made to keep their ground against the temptation, and stand conquerors, 2 Cor. xii. 9. They shall have grace to discover the snare, and grace to withstand the solicitations to comply with it. And

that is a great favour bestowed on poor, weak, self-emptied Christians, in whom grace from the treasure of favour does triumph; while others leaning to themselves are suffered to fall, Is. xl. 30. 31. The truth is, there is no temptation so contemptible, but it will lay a self-confident man on his back; and none so great, but by faith the weakest Christian may get over it, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

(2.) At least temptation shall not get a complete victory over them, as over unbelievers: Luke xxi. 31. 32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* Satan carried Peter far, even to the denying of Christ; but yet he found favour, that he could not get him all the length he would have had him. They may fall deep in temptation, but they will not be suffered to drown; *for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand,* Psal. xxxvii. 24.

5. Even when fallen into sin, the Lord will not leave them, nor cast them off, Heb. xiii. 5. They grieve the Spirit by their falls: so they may expect in that case, that God will withdraw the light of his countenance, that he will set a mark of his indignation upon their way, and it may cost them broken bones ere they recover. Yet in this case they shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) God will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will raise them up again, John viii. 35. Some fall off, and are never recovered: but as for believers, not one of them shall be lost. God's love to them is through Jesus Christ; and forasmuch as he is always beloved of the Father, they shall ever be loved for his sake, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—33. And love is active, to raise up the beloved party fallen.

(2.) While he raiseth them up, he will make their falls work for good, Rom. viii. 28. Out of the eater shall be brought forth meat, and out of the strong sweetnes.

sweetness. Satan shall be outshot in his own bow. They shall thereby be let into a clearer view of the corruption of their nature, see more need of Christ and his grace, be more emptied of themselves, and learn to prize imputed righteousness more, and so be led more to a life of faith, and close dependence on the Lord.

6. In a time of public calamity. We have all reason to look for such a time on this guilty declining generation, that God will sum up the old and new debts of Scotland, and charge them together upon the generation that is filling up the measure of our fathers. But come what will come, they that are once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) It may be they shall be hid, and kept out of trouble, that the stroke shall not reach them, Zeph. ii. 3. The floods may swell, yet he that sitteth on the floods can keep them from touching his own when he will; and often does so, Psal. xxxii. 6. *Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.* Whatever be the stroke that is sent, every arrow has its commission, and can touch none whom God will have safe, Psal. xci. 7. as in the cases of Noah and Lot.

(2.) If it do fall upon them, they may expect a gracious mixture of favour in it, Jer. xv. 11. *The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction.* And the Lord has often made his care of his people in common calamity, with the beautiful mixture of kindnesses with sharp trials, more desirable in the issue, than to have been kept quite free, Rom. v. 3. This made Paul take a pleasure in distresses, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

(3.) Though it should come to an extremity with the child of God, yet the sting shall be out of it, and so it shall do him no real harm. Death is the worst of it, but the child of God may meet it with that say-

ing, 1 Cor. xv. 55. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* The truth is, whereas the blessings of the wicked are cursed, the curses are changed into blessings to them that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 28.

7. *Lastly,* At death, and through all the ages of eternity. During life the wicked receive many common favours from the Lord, but at death that spring is quite dried up to them. But then the spring of favour to them that are in Christ, never to be interrupted any more, begins to flow abundantly. They shall then obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They shall then be perfectly freed from sin, and all inclination or temptation to it, Heb. xii. 23. They will then get a full answer to that petition, *Lead us not into temptation.* The leprosy in the house will then be quite removed, when it is pulled down. And the body of sin shall breathe out its last with the death of the body.

(2.) They shall be freed from all trouble whatever, and enjoy perfect happiness in the full enjoyment of God, Rev. xiv. 13. At the last day their bodies shall obtain the favour of a blessed resurrection, and soul and body shall be eternally glorified together.

III. I shall next confirm the doctrine, That a sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord. This is evident, if ye consider,

1. They have a right to the whole treasure of favour through Jesus Christ, in whom they are interested, 1 Cor. iii. 22. 23.—*All are yours; and ye are Christ's.* It is the purchase of his precious blood, and a purchase made for them: and hence not only the love and mercy of God, but the justice of God secures their enjoyment of it, 2 Thess. i. 6. 7.

2. Jesus Christ is the dispenser of the treasure, the high Steward of the house of heaven. As he has purchased it by his blood, so the Father has put the dispensing or distributing of it in his hand, John v. 22.

Matth.

Matth. xxviii. 18. Now he is their best friend, yea, he is their husband, their head, and they are members of his body. How then can they miss of obtaining favour of the Lord?

3. The enjoyment of it is secured to them by the covenant of promises. In the covenant there are promises suited to every case they can be in; all these are *yea and amen in Christ*. So being interested in Christ, they are interested in all the promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. These are the several articles of their marriage-covenant with Christ, by which the whole treasure of the favour of God is settled upon Christ's espoused ones, for their throughbearing in time, and complete provision for all eternity.

4. *Lastly*, They have each of them a private key to the treasure, and that is faith; hence says our Lord, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* There is a cloud of witnesses, Heb. xi. who did, and suffered great things; not by their own strength, but by furniture from heaven: and how did they obtain it, but by faith, that self-emptying, taking, receiving grace, out of Christ's fulness? They who can rightly manage this key, need never want, be their case as low as it can be: faith is a noble provider, bringing strength to the weak, light to the blind, food to the hungry, cloathing to the naked, &c.

I shall shut up this doctrine with some improvement.

USE I. of information. It informs us, that,

1. Jesus Christ is the way to the Father, and the only way, John xiv. 6. Whoso would obtain favour of the Lord, must make him their friend in the first place. For he is the one Mediator, and all communication that we have with Heaven must be by him. They who place their confidence of acceptance with God in their duties, will obtain indignation and wrath, instead of favour from the Lord. For in Christ

Christ only God is or can be well pleased with one that is a sinful creature.

2. Those who are interested in Christ are made up for ever, their bread is baken for time and eternity. They are provided for all conditions they can be in, or circumstances they can be brought into. This is a plentiful treasure, and a treasure that has no bottom, which is made over to them in Christ. Alas ! that ever any losses in the world should disquiet a believer, that *has in heaven a better and an enduring substance*, Heb. x. 34. He may put his gain in Christ in the balance with all worldly losses, and it will weigh down them all.

3. Those who are without Christ are without the favour of God, Eph. ii. 12. Common favours they may receive, but special favour is far from them. The truth is, the best things they get are blasted to them ; hence their prosperity destroys them, and the very gospel of God is the favour of death to them. How can they have the favour of a holy just God, who are not reconciled to him in his Son, and clothed with his righteousness ?

4. Lastly, It is believers own fault, that at any time they are not sufficiently provided according as their case requires. They may have it for the bringing it forth out of the treasure, John i. 16. The breasts are full, if we could suck of the divine consolations. The armoury is sufficiently furnished for the spiritual warfare, if we could bring forth the weapons. The promises which the believer is interested in, are the channel of conveyance of supply : but alas ! faith is often wanting, which should draw it in through these means of conveyance. If we could believe, all things would be possible.

USE II. of exhortation, both to sinners and saints.
And,

First, To sinners. Labour ye above all things to get an interest in Christ. O that I could engage you to this pursuit ! Truly this is and ought to be made by

by you the great business of your life, the great interest ye are to pursue, John vi. 29. Ye are all pursuing some one interest or other ; and carnal worldly interest is what has the greatest number of followers. I would exhort you to labour to secure an interest in Christ. To press this, consider,

Mot. 1. An interest in Christ is the most worthy interest ye can pursue. And I would commend it to you as such, as deserving your highest esteem and regard, as far excelling all the low and secular interests that can possibly engage your attention. It is the one thing needful, in comparison of which all other pursuits are arrant trifles.

Mot. 2. It is an interest that ye may now obtain. Christ is willing to be yours, and to confer upon you his whole fulness, all the riches of grace and glory. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* *To day, if ye will hear the voice of Christ speaking in the gospel, harden not your hearts.* Christ now calls you to come to him, that ye may have an interest in him. O then for the Lord's sake, and your own souls sake, delay not to come to him, that ye may have life, and obtain favour of the Lord.

Secondly, To saints. Labour ye to improve your interest in Christ, by bringing in to yourselves daily out of that treasure for whatsoever ye need. The treasure is opened to you, ye are allowed free access to it ; improve your privilege, by bringing forth out of it suitable supply for all your wants.

Quest. But how is that to be done ? what way can one bring forth supply out of the treasure of favour ?
Ans. By faith. Faith is the key of the treasure-door that opens it, the feet that carry into it, the hand of the soul that takes up the necessary supply, and brings it away, Heb. xi. Hence the believer is said to live by faith, Gal. ii. 20. it being that which by its communication with Christ maintains the spiritual life, and is the great provider for all other graces. Now, to manage this work successfully,

i. Ye

1. Ye must lay all your wants upon him. That moment that Christ and a soul meet in the way of the everlasting covenant, the soul embracing him in the gospel-offer, he says to the soul, as Judg. xix. 20. *Peace be with thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me.* Whatever ye want for soul and body, duty or danger, time or eternity, let it all lie on me. And this is agreeable to the marriage covenant, wherein the provision lies upon the husband, 1 Pet. v. 7. Now faith is to say, “ Be it so; from henceforth all my wants be on my Lord.” And this implies two things.

(1.) Renouncing of self-provision, or living on one's own stock and purchase, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.* Faith empties a soul of itself; it is a man's going out of himself to Jesus Christ for all. While the provision brought from Egypt lasted, the manna fell not: and while men are busy bringing forth of their own store for their needs, the treasure in heaven is locked upon them; but it is opened to the self-emptied believer, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

(2.) Trusting him for the supply of all your wants, betaking yourselves to him to live wholly by him. Ye must be like a poor man, who can do nothing for himself, being utterly unable to work and win any thing, that casts himself on his rich friend for all he needs, Psal. lv. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7. It is a pithy description of faith which we have, Ruth ii. 12. —*The Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust;* for the believer is like a silly chicken, unable to preserve itself from the bird of prey, getting in under the wings of the dam for protection.

2. Ye must lay your wants before him, table your complaints, and present your petitions unto him, upon whom all your wants are laid, Matth. xxi. 22. Thus Paul did again and again, and brought forth plentifully out of the treasure, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. What God

God has a mind to give, he will yet have his people to seek. And this imports,

(1.) A free unfolding of your case to him, as to your best friend able and willing to help, Eph. iii. 12. Faith makes the believer pour out his heart to the Lord, Psal. lxii. 8. Ye must unfold it freely, fully, without reserve; for to do otherwise would argue distrust. Many a time the believer's heart is full of griefs, sorrows, and anxieties: but the best ease a pained heart can get, is pouring out itself in the bosom of a God in Christ, Cant. vii. 11.

(2.) A resignation of the matter into the hands of the Lord, Psal. xxxvii. 5. He is infinitely wise, and the care of the whole household of heaven is devolved upon him by his Father, John v. 22. He is to judge what wants are really fit to be supplied to every one, what measures of supply they must have, at what time the supply is to be communicated, and in what manner. And it is the work of faith, to leave all these upon him, and rest satisfied in his wise disposal.

3. Ye must believe the promises relative to the supply of your needs, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* God will have his people deal with him in the way of trusting of his word of promise. And the more firm trust we have in his word, the more abundantly do we receive of his fulness. They are the breasts of the divine consolations, and faith sucks the sap of them, by believing them, Psal. xxviii. 7. *The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped.*

(1.) Ye must believe them as a sure word, that shall certainly be made out, Psal. cxix. 160. The unbelieving world take the promises but for fair words, which they will not trust to: but do thou take them for sure words, big with mercy and favour, which shall not miscarry, but certainly bring forth at the set time, Psal. xii. 6.

(2.) Ye

60 *Saints exhorted to improve their Interest in Christ.*

(2.) Ye must believe them with a faith of particular application, not only that they shall be made out to others, but that they shall be made out to you, Mark xi. 24. Jam. i. 6. 7. What canst thou be the better of a salve not applied to thy sore, or of a promise not applied to thy soul? The devils may believe that the promises shall be accomplished, but they cannot believe they shall be accomplished to them. In our national covenant we abjure the Pope's general and doubtful faith. But alas! the applicatory and appropriating act of faith, whereby one appropriates Christ and his benefits to one's self, is much fallen out of our divinity now-a-days, and is in hazard of being extruded, that it may not enter again. The promises are God's blank bills and bonds; if ye do not by faith fill up your own name in them, what will they avail you? But fill it up by faith, and come forward with them in your hand, saying with David, Psal. cxix. 49. *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*

4. Lastly, Wait and hang on about the Lord's hand confidently, till the supply come, using the means of God's appointment for it, Is. xl. ult. Psal. xxvii. ult. Faith and the use of means do sweetly agree, so that they be means of God's appointment, Psal. xxxvii. 3. And they must not be separated. To use means without dependence on the Lord for the success, is Atheism: to pretend to believe, and neglect the means of God's institution, is presumption. But be you in the use of means, and wait on him with confident expectation, that what is good the Lord will give. This is it which in the Old Testament is celebrated under the name of *trusting, relying, and staying on the Lord.* Trust reposed in a generous man, is a strong tie on him to answer expectation, Gen. xix. 8. And they who trust in the Lord shall never be ashamed.

Thus I have shewn you, how you may bring forth out of God's treasure of favour. O ye Christians who have

have interest in Christ, let this be your daily work; apply to the treasure. For motives, consider,

1. It is a high privilege, that it is open to you, and ye have access to it; and will ye not improve it? If ye consider that it is shut on the most part of the world, that it was opened to you by the blood of the Son of God, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon you, bringing you to embrace the everlasting covenant, ye will prize that access, and improve it. Had one ready access allowed them to their prince's favour, would they slight it? No surely.

2. This is the Christian life, by which true believers are distinguished from hypocrites, even the life of faith, Gal. ii. 20. And what is that but the daily travelling betwixt their own emptiness and the fulness that is in Jesus Christ? Whereas the hypocrite lives upon his own stock, a stranger to communion with God, and drawing supplies from him in the way of believing. As ever ye would prove yourselves sincere Christians then, take this way.

3. The want of this is the cause that Christians lead such poor lives as they do, Matth. xiii. ult. *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* Many who have cordially embraced Christ in the gospel-offer, spend their time more in complaining of their wants, than applying to the treasure for supply; more in doubting of their interest in Christ, than in improving it this way; in disputing their right to the treasure of favour in Christ, more than believing. And hence such,

(1.) Unfruitful lives, little progress in holiness, victory over corruption, usefulness for God in their stations, &c. Col. ii. 6. 7. Little faith will always make little holiness: forasmuch as faith purifies the heart, and is the blessed instrument of the soul's communion with God, by which influences from heaven are brought down, without which the soul must needs be in a withered case.

(2.) Uncomfortable lives. *God is the God of consolation,*

solation, Rom. xv. 5. and the way to obtain it is in the way of believing, ver. 13. The truth is, it is no wonder the Christian, when he looks to himself, be discouraged, and drive heavily, since often he can see nothing there but weakness, darkness, and deadness: but faith looks to Christ, and sees a fulness in him, and tells the soul it has all in him, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: Col. ii. 9. 10.

4. This is a day wherein Christians have much need to keep up communion with God, and live by faith, Eph. v. 16. It is a day wherein religion is like to die out, and the little of it that is left is in hazard of dwindling away, in principle and practice, into mere morality: it is a day of many temptations and snares, and withdrawing of the Spirit, and wherein judgement seems to be hastening on apace, spiritual and temporal judgements too, for that men have not received the truth in the love thereof, and have walked in darkness while they had the light.

5. *Lastly*, They are most welcome to the Lord, who come with the most holy boldness, and oftenest unto him, for supply out of the treasure, Matth. xv. 28. *O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Those honour God most, who are most emptied of themselves, and have most busines in heaven, for supply of their wants. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked: and there is a fulness in this treasure of favour lodged in Christ. His fulness is not the fulness of a vessel only to serve itself, but of a fountain to be communicated. O then bring forth daily out of it.

Unbelief

Unbelief the Sin against Christ by way
of Eminency ; and the Wrong done to
the Soul thereby.

PROVERBS viii. 36.

*But he that sinneth against me, wrangeth his own
soul; all they that hate me, love death.*

TH E preceding verse gave us the happiness of those who are interested in Christ ; this verse gives us the misery of those who reject him. And in it we have two things.

1. A dreadful risk some sinners run ; they *sin against the Wisdom of God, and wrong their own souls.* In which consider,

(1.) The dangerous adventure they make ; they *sin against Christ the Son of God.* I told you, that Christ the personal Wisdom of God is here meant. I must here inquire what is meant by *sinning against him.* Christ being true God, every sin men commit is against him, and wrongs their souls too. But it is not every sin that is here meant ; it is some sin by way of eminency against the second person of the Trinity ; for it is such a one as is constructed to be a hating of him, and loving death, which cannot be said of every sin. You know that the Holy Ghost being true God also, every sin is in some sort against him ; yet there is a sin against the Holy Ghost so called by way of eminency : so here there is a sin against Christ by way of eminency. Now those sins which have their denomination from the several persons of the Trinity, respect them not so much in their essence, as in their office, operation, and work. The Father is Creator, and original Lawgiver ; the Son Redeemer and Saviour ; the Holy Ghost ap-

plier of Christ's purchase, Enlightener and Sanctifier. The first sin of Adam in him and us, and the sins of the Pagans still, are the sin against the Father, the transgressing the law of the Creator. The sin of gospel-despisers is the sin against the Son, as a rejecting of the gospel of Christ. The sin of obstinate and malicious deliberate fighting against God, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, as against the inward working of the Holy Ghost in them. All the world are by nature under the first, and so liable to wrath : but the Son of God is the anointed Saviour and Redeemer, by whom alone sinners may be recovered, John xiv. 6. He is the ordinance of God for sinners salvation. He is the remedy against sin provided by the Father ; so the rejecting of this ordinance and remedy is the sin against Christ. That is, in a word, it is the sin opposite to the seeking and finding of Christ, ver. 34. 35. namely, not closing with, but rejecting Christ offered in the gospel, called the sin of *unbelief*, John xvi. 8. 9.

(2.) The effect of this dangerous adventure ; *He wrongeth his own soul.* The word properly imports violence, and might be read, *He doth violence to his own soul.* So it is rendered, Zeph. iii. 4. He ruins himself, he is a self destroyer, a self-murderer. The man is lying pining away in his sin ; Christ the Physician comes to his bed-side, saying, “Sinner, I offer “you life and salvation with myself.” But he turns away, he will have none of him, he cannot part with his disease. So he wrongs his own soul ; he dies of it. But there is more than that in it. The man slights Christ : who loses by it ? Not Christ, not his messengers, but the poor unbeliever himself, Prov. ix. 12.

2. The nature of this practice, which shews what a dreadful risk it must needs be. But of that more afterwards.

Two doctrines may be deduced from the words.

Doct. I.

DOCTR. I. *Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency.*

DOCTR. II. *The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.*

I shall illustrate each doctrine in order;

DOCTR. I. *Unbelief, or a sinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is the sin against Christ by way of eminency.* That is, If a man designed an affront to the Son of God, if he were in a mind to pierce him to the heart, and put a signal affront on him, this is the way to do it, namely, to slight the offer which he makes of himself in the gospel.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him.

II. Confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on him for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner.

III. Improve the subject, in an address both to saints and sinners.

I. I am to shew what treatment of Christ it is, that is this sinning against him. In the general, it is twofold.

First, There is a doctrinal treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. So Deists, Socinians, Arians, Papists, &c. sin against him. I infest not on this further than to warn you, that there is, at this day, in this island, appearing a greater disposition to depart from the faith, than there has been at least these thirty years past. Some in the neighbouring

land, not Papists, nor Prelatists, but Dissenters, are undermining the doctrine of the eternal Godhead of Christ; and some in this church are making woful advances towards obscuring the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ. All which are the native bitter fruits of the generation's practical slighting of, and finning against Christ, under the light of the gospel.

Secondly, There is a practical treatment of him, that is this finning against him. And of this kind is,

1. Living ignorant of Christ, and the fundamental truths of the gospel, John i. 10. Grossly ignorant persons are doubtless unbelievers. For how can they believe, who know not what to believe? how can they believe in Christ, who have no knowledge of him? Psal. ix. 10. They are slighters of Christ, who have means of knowledge, and yet know him not: they know him not, because they will not be acquainted with him, Job xxi. 14. *They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* And thus many proclaim their soul-ruining unbelief, by their slighting of ordinances and means of knowledge, and not profiting under them. Were there a physician in the country-side curing all freely, and if any should never use means to get acquainted with him, would not such persons be slighters of him, to their own ruin?

2. People's living insensible of their absolute need of Christ, Matth. ix. 12. He comes in the gospel, and offers himself with all his salvation to sinners, to every one that hears it. Why does he so, but because they must perish without him, and that they need him? But the most part find no pinching need of him, and therefore never come to him. This is slighting him with a witness, Rev. iii. 17. *Because thou sayst, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* The law is preached, and their misery without Christ is told them: yet are they never so far convinced as

to be pricked to the heart, Acts ii. 37. They have no more ado with him, than a hale and found person with the physician.

3. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel, the record that God hath given concerning his Son, 1 John v. 10. 11. In the gospel it is testified to us from heaven, That Christ alone is the great ordinance of God for life and salvation to poor sinners; that God hath placed that life in him, and offers it in and with him to them. This is the doctrine of the gospel; but who believes it? If. liii. 1. *Object.* Who does not believe it? *Ans.* Alas! that is the nature of the disease. Men may convince men who are hearers of the gospel of the sin of murder, adultery, &c.; but if the Spirit of God take it not in hand, they will not convince them of unbelief, John xvi. 8. 9. But for your conviction, (which may the Spirit carry home!), I will tell you, the treatment which Christ gets from most men, upon the back of the revelation of that record that God hath given of him to them, is such as that, 1 Sam. x. 24. 27. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?—But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him; and as that, 2 Kings v. 10. 11. 12. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana, and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage. Of this treatment of Christ take these two evidences.

Evid. 1. Their not seeking after him with the utmost diligence, till they find him. Compare Prov. viii. 34. & 36. *Blessed is the man that heareth me,*
watching

watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.—*But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.* Paul believed the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and therefore pressed forward, Phil. iii. 14. If you were desperately wounded, and one told you of an infallible cure that one had, and which you might get: if after this notice given you, you did not with your utmost might and most laborious endeavours seek after it, would not all the world conclude, you did not believe there was such a remedy to be got by you? But your souls are thus wounded, and we tell you day by day, that there is an infallible remedy for them in Christ; and yet ye do not diligently seek after him till ye find him. May we not then say, with the prophet, *Who hath believed our report?* Is. liii. 1.

Evid. 2. Their seeking life and salvation another way. So do all unbelievers, who give not up themselves to utter despair. They leave the King's highway, John xiv. 6. and betake themselves every one to his own way, Is. liii. 6. God says of Christ, *This is the way, walk ye in it.* But they will not venture on it, but take another way, by which they turn their backs on Christ, and so sin against him.

(1.) The way of the law or covenant of works, namely, by doing to seek life, Rom. ix. 32. This is the way that all men naturally betake themselves to, and that every man abides in, till the grace of God bring him to Jesus Christ. The natural bias of the heart to it I have shewn elsewhere, together with the enmity of the heart against Jesus Christ *. It is little they do; but it is according to their doing, not according to their interest in the blood of Christ, that they expect to find favour with God. This speaks unbelief, and flighting of Christ with a witness; for

* See *Fourfold State*, state 2. head 1: under the title, *Of the corruption of man's nature.*

if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. ult.

(2.) The way of uncovenanted mercy. They pretend to do what they can; and where they come short, they expect that God will be merciful to them and forgive them; while in the mean time they do not consider that they can only find mercy being in Christ. Thus they do at least mix their own righteousness with Christ's, if they have any regard to Christ at all, Gal. iii. 12.

4. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel upon the authority of a divine testimony, but on some low account. As to many pretending to believe in Christ, we may see the quite contrary in them to that, 1 Theff. ii. 13.—*When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.* What belief they have of it, they owe to their education, not to regeneration; to the teaching of men, not to the teaching of the Spirit. What makes some Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, Papists, in foreign countries, namely, that it is the religion they were brought up in, that is even the thing which makes them Christians in our country. O Sirs, that is not faith in Christ, but real unbelief of him, and flighting of him, as receiving his doctrine not upon his own authority, and the testimony of the Spirit, but of man, John v. 34. If ever ye come to honour Christ by believing, your faith will be built on another foundation, John iv. 42. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

5. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel with a particular application to their own case, or to themselves. Here is the trial of a convinced sinner. Christ said, Mark xvi. 15. 16. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Hereupon the apostle

apostle says to the jailor at Philippi, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*, Acts xvi. 31. And every minister of Christ may say so to every man, and God says it to every one to whom his word comes. So that although we do believe that Christ is able and willing to save all his elect, yet if I do not believe that he is able and willing to save **ME**, and that he offers himself to **ME**, I am still an unbeliever, and do sin against Christ. For,

(1.) The offer is general, and comprehends us all, If. lv. 1. Rev. iii. 20. If any of you then believe it as to all others, and not as to yourselves, ye make God a liar, and do not believe his word; because though God says, The offer is to all that hear the gospel, ye contradict it, saying, that the offer belongs not to you, and that Christ is not willing to be yours.

(2.) What benefit can any man have by a general promise or offer of mercy from God or man, which he does not appropriate to himself? A king offers mercy to all the rebels that will take it: one says, "O but it is to all the rest, but not to me, I will not venture out of my lurking-hole." Is not this a belying of the king, and a refusing of mercy, and slighting the offer?

(3.) How is it possible that one can accept, receive, and rest on Christ for salvation, if he make not a particular application of the promise of the gospel, or gospel-offer to himself? The acceptance, &c. must needs be founded on the offer, and can be no larger than the offer is: If I do not believe that God offers to be my God in Christ, I cannot accept him as such. If I do not believe that Christ gives himself to **ME** in the gospel-offer, I cannot accept, receive, and embrace, nor rest on him.

(4.) Wherein does our faith of the promises of the gospel go beyond the faith of devils, if it proceed not the length of application of them to ourselves? Jam. ii. 19. The devils believe the threatenings of God, and that with application, and they tremble: and that

that they believe the promises of God too in the general, that they shall be made out, we have no reason to doubt, when we consider, they believe God's faithfulness to his word, and therefore tremble in expectation of what he has threatened. And they know it is the same faithful God who has made the promises, that has made the threatenings. And now that for a course of five thousand years they have observed the promises still fulfilled in their time, we may be sure that they do expect the rest will be fulfilled too. Wherein then can our faith go beyond theirs, if we believe not the promise or offer of life and salvation to us in particular?

Wherefore in not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, with particular application to ourselves, we sin against Christ, and wrong our own souls. Against this Satan bends his force, and under a vail of humility Christ is affronted by the unbelieving sinner: and indeed it is a mighty thing to believe this, over the belly of seen and felt vileness and unworthiness: but faith will make its way over it all, and honour Christ by believing his word.

6. *Lastly*, Their not taking, accepting, and receiving of Christ in the gospel-offer, and resting on him, for life and salvation, John i. 11. 12. The royal Bridegroom is slighted, sinned against, and affronted, when the offered marriage is neglected, refused, or shifted, or in any ways not concluded, by the sinful children of Adam; when the bride halts betwixt two opinions, and does not conclude the blessed bargain. And thus sinners sin against Christ,

1st, When the sinner will not take Christ, but holds by other lovers, namely, the world and lusts. There are two opposite parties in stit of sinners hearts, who are hearers of the gospel, Christ on the one hand, lusts on the other. These last have so engaged the hearts of many, that they give Christ the refusal, Jer. ii. 25. John v. 40. They see there is no dealing with both;

both; if they take Christ, they must let these go a-way; and therefore since they cannot otherwise have him, they will not have him. They cannot think of being deprived or abridged of their sinful liberty: so the offer of Christ is made them, but they will not accept it.

2dly, When the sinner dare not take Christ, or embrace him in the gospel-offer, fearing that he will never be his, nor give himself to him. This is the snare for the convinced sinner, and as effectually keeps him from Christ, as the love of lusts does the secure, Jer. ii. 25. One may see, that the former makes way for the latter. The ground of this is one's sinfulness and unworthiness seen and felt, which makes them to think it would be presumption in them to believe. Hence they say, as Luke v. 8. *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* The hand of Joab is in this. Satan has two glasses to let men see their sins in.

(1.) A lessening glass, which he holds before the eyes of secure sinners, causing their sins appear little. Hence their enormous outbreaks, though habitual, are accounted but infirmities; and lesser sins, which the world makes no bones of, are accounted no sins at all.

(2.) A magnifying glass, which he holds before the eyes of the convinced sinner. And one may know that he is looking on his sinful self in Satan's glass, when he sees his own sinfulness so, as he cannot see God's mercy, the virtue of Christ's blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, above his sinfulness; when the sight of the disease sets him farther from the Physician, and makes him stand off from Christ, instead of running to him; when instead of quickening him to embrace the remedy, it causes his heart to faint so, as he cannot put forth his hand to apply the offered cure.

That this is from Satan, is manifest, in that it is directly contrary, (1.) To the true use of the law in subserviency

subserviency to the gospel, Gal. iii. 24. The law discovers sin, and the soul's misery by it: but then the design of that to the hearers of the gospel is, that they may be made to prize and run unto Christ. (2.) To the ample declarations of love and mercy made in the gospel, which shew that there is no case whatsoever so bad, but Christ is both able and willing to take it in hand, If. i. 18. & iv. 1. Rev. iii. 20. & xxiii. 17.

3dly, When the sinner dare not venture on Christ alone for salvation, but to strengthen that bottom, goes about to render himself acceptable to God by his own obedience, Gal. v. 4. The covenant of works is so engrained in our natures, and so ignorant are we naturally of the mystery of Christ, and the way of imputed righteousness; that till the Spirit of the Lord savinely enlighten one in the knowledge of Christ, he will have but low thoughts of an imputed righteousness as an unsecure way, and will therefore go about to strengthen it by the addition of his own works; though it is but the attempting to mix clay with iron, that will not do. But the Spirit of the Lord, in the day of power, will carry men quite off their own bottom.

4thly, When the sinner does not take him for all the ends for which he is appointed of the Father for sinners, and in all his offices, but divides them, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is given to us for all in the gospel-offer, for salvation from sin as well as from wrath, to be our Prophet to teach us, our Priest to save us, and our King to govern us. When therefore the sinner does not take him for sanctification as well as justification, he is not received at all indeed, but sinned against, and rejected as the ordinance for sanctifying of sinners.

Lastly, When the sinner does not believe, that he shall have life and salvation by Jesus Christ. True faith may be accompanied with many doubtings; sometimes one may be ready to say, *My hope is perished from the Lord:* but it is plain, that where there is no

74 *General Considerations, shewing Unbelief to be such persuasion in greater or lesser measure at any time, there is no faith.*

II. I proceed to confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner. This will appear from some general considerations, and from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against Christ wrapt up in unbelief.

First, It appears from some general considerations.

1. Faith in Christ is an honouring of him in a special manner, John v. 23. 24. therefore unbelief must be a special dishonour done to him. Faith gives glory to the object of it, Rom. iv. 20. unbelief then robs him of that glory, and casts reproach on him. Faith puts the crown on Christ's head, Cant. iii. ult. unbelief pulls it off, and tramples it under foot. See then how good, necessary, and pleasing to Christ believing in him is; so bad, noxious, and abominable to him unbelief must be.

2. Unbelief is the great Antichrist in the heart, setting up there in downright opposition to the Son of God. The end of Christ's coming was to destroy sin, 1 John iii. 8. the effect of unbelief is to preserve sin in life and vigour. It is the soul and life of all other sins, the shield that keeps their heads and hearts hale: take it away, they all die, and the soul revives; leave it upon their head, and they all live, and the soul dies, John viii. 24. It is the general of the army of hell in mens breasts, against whom the word is given in the day of power, *Fight neither with small nor great,* but with unbelief, the king of sins, John xvi. 8. 9.

3. It is a sin that so ingrosses the whole soul to itself against Christ, that it leaves him nothing to take part with him against it. If a man sin against Christ by oppression, murder, &c. his judgement, reason, natural conscience, will in greater or lesser measure plead

plead the Lord's cause against him, and will prepare the way for the Spirit's convictions. But as for unbelief, there is no help from them against it. The mystery of Christ lies beyond the ken of mere reason, 1 Cor. ii. 14. how then can the blackness of the sin of unbelief be discerned thereby, or the natural conscience check for it? Nay, mere reason, in its corrupt state, sides against Christ with unbelief, in as far as the best way it knows, is the way of the law or covenant of works. So that on this occasion, Meroz's curse may light on all the faculties of the soul, *because they come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty*, Judg. v. 23.

4. It is the sin that ruins the hearers of the gospel, with whom Christ has to do, John iii. 18. 19. *He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* The poor Pagans who have not heard of Christ, sin not against him in this sort, John xv. 22. Whatever sins the hearers of the gospel may have been chargeable with, if they will believe in Christ, they shall never be charged on them: upon this point of believing, or not believing, turns their salvation, or damnation, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore since it is the ruining sin, it must needs be the great sin against Christ.

5. It is equal to the grossest sins against the light of nature. The Pharisee could say, *I am not unjust, an extortioner, an adulterer;* the publican durst not say so. But the one rejected the propitiation, which the other embraced, Luke xviii. 13. and so was accepted of God, while the other was rejected. You will bless God ye are honest, sober men and women, no adulterers, murderers, &c.; but ye do not see the bloody sin of unbelief, which is as ill as any of them, H. lxvi. 3. *He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; i. e. An unbeliever is as a murderer in God's sight.*

fight. Faith was the great duty under the Old Testament as well as under the New, ver. 2. And those Jews who put their sacrifices of oxen, lambs, and their incense, in the Messiah's stead, by unbelief were as murderers, &c.

6. It is above these sins in odiousness and hainousness, Heb. x. 28. 29. *He that despised Moses law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much severer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, &c.?* There was a consultation of the Trinity concerning the making of man, and the result was, his creation after God's image. How great must those sins be, which, breaking the laws of his creation, do signally deface that image? There was also a consultation of the Trinity concerning man's restoration, and the result was, the Son of God giving himself to the death for their recovery. How much greater then must the sin of unbelief be, which of its own nature tends to make the whole contrivance vain? The Sodomites were great sinners, and the Capernaumites unbelievers: which were the greatest sinners? The greatest punishment by a just Judge speaks the greatest sin: and so the Capernaumite unbelievers were the greatest sinners, Matth. xi. 23. 24.

7. It has none that goes beyond it but the sin against the Holy Ghost; and even it is unbelief carried to its utmost height, Heb. x. 29. Unbelief strikes against the Father and the Son, casting dishonour on both, John v. 23. If to this be added a doing despite to the Spirit of God, the sinner is at his utmost pitch of wickedness. And none are capable of the latter, but he that is guilty of the former.

8. *Lastly,* It is a sin directly striking against the glorious office wherewith Christ is invested, and while he is in the actual exercise of that office, John viii. 49. The Father minding to recover the glory of his wronged attributes, and lost sinners of the race of Adam, invested his own Son in the mediatory office, that

that he should build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory. The Son comes in this his noble office, with his Father's commission, to prosecute it for these noble ends: and unbelief rejects him as such, and casts dishonour on him, Luke xix. 14. To do a personal injury to a king is a crime, but to do him an injury striking against his kingly character and office, and that while he is in the administration of his royal office, is a crime of a far deeper die, than any merely personal injury done him. So the case is here.

Secondly, That unbelief is the sin against Christ by way of eminency, appears from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against him wrapt up therein.

1. It is a despising him as the Father's choice. The voice of the gospel is, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matth. iii. ult. The unbeliever answers, *We will not have this man to reign over us*, Luke xix. 14. When man fell, God looked on the whole creation, and there was none found able to help him: so he made choice of his own Son, that the breach might be under his hand, Psal. lxxxix. 19. This comes to be proclaimed in the gospel; and as Samuel said to all the people, *See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?* 1 Sam. x. 24. it says, *Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth*, Is. xlvi. 1. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. But unbelief says, as 1 Sam. x. 27. *How shall this man save us?* and they despised him. So unbelievers pour contempt on the choice. Ask the unbelieving Jews, if they approve the choice? No; they say, it is *a stumbling-block*. Ask the unbelieving Gentiles, if they approve it? No; they say, it is *foolishness*, 1 Cor. i. 23. Therefore do others as they will, they will not lay their weight on that bottom. Only believers cry, *Grace, grace to the choice! a noble choice! Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God*, ver. 24. compare Matth. xi. 6.

2. It is a trampling upon his love in undertaking the mediatory office. Man having sinned, justice demands satisfaction; the poor bankrupts cannot discharge the debt themselves, angels found themselves too weak to bear such a burden, sacrifice and offering cannot be accepted as a compensation for the wrong done to a holy God. The proposal is made to the Son, and respect to his Father's glory, and un-hired love to sinners, makes him accept and strike hands, *Lo, I come, &c.* Psal. xl. 6. 7. And after all, unbelief says in effect, he might have let it alone; the unbeliever is not for life and salvation that way. Christ's Father is content, he is so, but the unbeliever is not, Psal. lxxxi. 11. How deep must the trampling on such love draw?

3. It is a treating of him as a liar and an impostor. The language of every unbeliever is that, John vii. 12. *He deceiveth the people.* Christ's name is the *Word of God*, by whom the mind of God touching the salvation of sinners is manifested to the world: he is by office interpreter of the Father's mind, the great Prophet and Teacher. He came from the Father's bosom, and reveals the way of salvation in the doctrine of the gospel. What is it not to believe him then, but to make him a liar? 1 John v. 10. And since the revelation made by him is upon such a weighty matter, the not believing it must needs infer the looking on him as an impostor. What then shall be given to that false heart, that thus sins against Christ? *Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper,* Psal. cxx. 4.

4. It is a contempt poured on his precious blood, and the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. The believer by faith gets in under that blood, Heb. xii. 24. but unbelief treads on it, chap. x. 29. This performance of the Son was looked upon as a sufficient mean to retrieve the Father's glory, and recover the sinner that was sunk lowest in sin and misery, Psal. lxxxix. 19. As such it is proposed to sin-

ners in the gospel; but they will not receive it. And if ye consider all the sets of unbelievers, the bold contemners, that go on in their sins, and hope for mercy; the legal professors, that lay the stress on their own duties; the trembling unbeliever, that dare not come to Christ; the desperate sinner, that says, *There is no hope*; they will all be found agreeing in maintaining low unworthy thoughts of the glorious ransom paid by Christ, and offered to them. The first say, All that was needless, God is merciful; the second, It is too weak a bottom to trust all to; the third, It may bear the weight of many, but it is too weak for theirs; the fourth, It can do nothing for them.

5. It is a frustrating of the ends of the death of Christ, as far as lies in the unbeliever's power. He had a long, sore, and helpless travail of soul: he endured it in hopes of a glorious issue, *Is. lxxii. 11. Heb. xii. 2.* But did all treat him as the unbelieving part of the world does, the issue would be but as it were bringing forth wind. At the expence of the blood of the Son of God, a medicine is prepared for perishing souls; but the unbeliever will not apply it, when it is brought to his hand: a feast is prepared, but the unbeliever will not eat of it; but says in effect, *To what purpose is this waste?*

6. Lastly, It is a declining of his government, and subjection to him, most reproachfully, *Luke xix. 14.* We see most of the hearers of the gospel at this pass with him; subject themselves to whom they will, they will not subject themselves to him; they stick by other lords. His Father has given him all power in heaven and earth; but they will not come under his power, as long as they can shift otherwise. There are many reasons of this, but there is one that is little observed, namely, unbelief, they cannot trust him. A wise people will not subject themselves willingly to one they cannot trust, *Judg. ix. 15. compare Psal. ii. ult.* They cannot trust him with their welfare, though he is the Father's Trustee, the Trustee of all believers:

believers: hence they say, he shall not be their Trustee. What wonder then that unbelief be a *piercing of him?* Zech. xii. 10.

From this doctrine we may learn lessons for saints, for sinners, and for all.

First, Here is a lesson for saints, or believers.

1. Prize the precious faith which God has given you, 2 Pet. i. 1. Have your souls been brought to believe in, accept, and embrace Jesus Christ offered in the gospel, for all his salvation, and so to come off from the course of flighting and finning against Christ? Do not undervalue it as a small thing, but look to the nature of reigning unbelief, and prize it next to the gift of his precious Son and Spirit. If it were but as a grain of mustard-seed, it is more precious than all the gold of the Indies, more precious than as many faithless works and duties, as would have filled up every minute of your time, since ye were born.

2. Wonder at his sparing you till ye were brought the length of believing in him. How deep did your unbelief go against him; what attribute of his did it not cast dirt upon; what was it he did or suffered, but it had an ill tale of? O, why did he put up all these affronts, and still insist on your believing, giving you his word, writ, seal, oath, and whatsoever could have been required of the most faithless man, to cause you believe him, till ye were won to faith in him?

3. Mourn over your remaining unbelief, as the father of the child did, Mark ix. 24. who said with tears, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* Jealousies of Christ are a disease that runs in the veins of all those of the blood royal of heaven, ay till they get home to their Father's house. How justly may he say, *O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?* Alas! can the saints experiences of his truth and faithfulness, and the tried word, carry them no further? If there could

could be any such uneasy passion as shame in heaven, they would blush for their unbelief whenever they got in there.

4. *Lastly,* See what it is that mars the communication betwixt Christ and you, and what makes you lead such a poor life, both in point of sanctification and comfort, Matth. xiii. ult. *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* Faith purifies the heart, unbelief makes it as the neglected garden, overgrown with weeds. Faith quiets the heart and cheers it, Rom. xv. 13. David's experience of the way of getting help from heaven we have, Psal. xxviii. 7. *My heart trusted in him, and I am helped.* Trust reposed in a generous man, able to help, brings him to put to his hand speedily, for the help of the party trusting him. No wonder that unbelief, being of such a nature, mar the communication.

Secondly, Here is a lesson for sinners, or unbelievers.

1. Ye are sinners against Christ in an eminent manner. Our text brings you in guilty of affronting the Son of God, sinning against the remedy of sin. Though the language of your lips may be, *Hosanna to the Son of David;* the language of your unbelieving hearts is, *Crucify him.* Ye are guilty of sinning against him at the rate which Pagans, yea and devils, never sinned against him. They broke the law of their Creator; but ye have not only done so, but ye are breaking the law of redeeming love, namely, the law of faith, too.

2. Here is a sin thou hast to be sensible of, and mourn for, which hitherto thou hast little regarded. May be thou hast sometimes been grieved for other sins, and mourned for them. But didst thou ever mourn for this? did ever this give thee a grieved heart? Truly this is the wound to the heart, this is the most dangerous evil, that keeps all the rest from healing. If ye have not been sensible of and affected with it, (1.) Your faith is likely to be but a fancy, the Spirit being promised for that end, John xvi. 8. 9.

(2.) Your

(2.) Your unbelief would be sure to be strengthened by all your other mourning for sin; and so instead of its bringing you nearer Christ, it would set you farther off from him, Matth. xxi. 31.

3. Here, even here, O sinner, lies your ruin for time and eternity, John viii. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth not, shall be damned.* This is the great soul-murdering sin among gospel-hearers, for it is the sinning against the remedy of sin. Consider,

(1.) It makes all your other plague-sores incurable, while it is not removed, John viii. 24. Your pride, passion, worldliness, &c. still run upon you: why, so they will always do, while the bloody issue of unbelief is not stopt. While that remains, they can admit no cure but a palliative one, after which they must needs break out again. For the falling dew shall as soon make its way through the flinty rock, as sanctifying influences shall come into you without union with Christ, which is marred by unbelief.

(2.) At this rate then ye must die in your sins eternally, and your unbelief must be the great cause of your ruin, 2 Thess. i. 8.

4. The condemnation of unbelievers must be most dreadful, since it is the sin against Christ, Matth. xi. 24. *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement, than for thee.* Other sins wound the soul; this resolutely keeps the wounds open, and will not suffer them to be healed. Other sins are against the sovereign authority of God in the law; this superadds thereto a contempt of unparalleled love and mercy opened to the sinner in the gospel. As then the sourest vinegar comes of the most generous wine, so the most fearful thunderclaps of wrath will break out on the sinner, from the contempt of a throne of grace through unbelief.

5. *Lastly,* Here is what may strike the bottom out of all your objections against your believing in Christ, fetch them from what quarter ye will, and dress them

them up in what form you please, whether the conclusion be, you may not, dare not, or ought not believe on Christ. As it is the commandment, *That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,* 1 John iii. 23. so not believing is the sin against Christ. Account ye of it as ye will, he will reckon it the greatest affront that ye can do him, and he will reckon with you for it as such. Wherefore let this short answer serve in the case.

Thirdly, Here is a lesson for all. It concerns us all to be convinced of the malignity against Christ and his Father that is in the sin of unbelief, to get above it, as we would throw the coals of hell-fire out of our bosom; to believe in Christ, embrace him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Head and Husband, and to live by faith on him. This is the way to honour the Son, the true way to be holy here, and happy hereafter.

Doc't. II. The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul.

Here I shall shew, how the unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul; and then deduce an inference or two for application.

I. I am to shew, how the unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul. The wrong here meant is real hurt or damage, arising from this woful practice. Now, on whom does it fall? On the sinner himself. I take it up in these two; that he wrongs his own soul *really*, and *only*.

First, The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul *really*. He does in very deed do hurt and bring damage to himself, not to his body only, but to his soul, the more precious part. He does violence to himself, he treats his own soul cruelly and unjustly. He carries against his own soul as an enemy, doing it real mischief. For by unbelief,

1st, A man keeps his soul in a state of separation
and

and alienation from God. The sinner by nature is far from God, without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, John xiv. 6. and unbelief keeps the soul from off that way, fixes the separation-wall, that as long as it remains in its power, the sinner can never meet with God, as rejecting the only meeting place.

2dly, A man keeps his soul under the guilt of all his sins. The blood of Jesus purgeth from all sin; but it must be sprinkled by faith on the soul, which unbelief refuseth, John viii. 24. It keeps the soul out of Christ; and while it is so, all the guilt remains, the yoke of his transgressions is wreathed about his neck, and all the cords of death abide about him in their force. No mourning or sorrow, tears or repentance, will loose them; only the blood of Christ procures pardon.

3dly, A man keeps his soul in a state of utter inability to do any thing that is good or acceptable in the sight of God, Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please him.* It keeps the reigning power of sin hale in the soul, and so preserves and feeds the several lusts, the devours of the soul. It binds up hand and foot, that he can do nothing, nor move a step heavenward, John xv. 5. For it blocks up all saving communication between heaven and the soul.

4thly, It fixes the soul in a state of condemnation, John iii. 18. *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* It keeps it under the curse of the first covenant, and exposes it to eternal destruction. It keeps it naked without a righteousness, destitute of any valid plea for eternal life. It leaves it without the city of refuge, every moment in hazard of being cut off by the avenger of blood.

Lastly, By refusing the remedy, the unbeliever brings double ruin on his own soul. The soul might be saved; but by unbelief salvation is refused, and so the soul is in worse case than if Christ had never been offered to it.

Secondly,

Secondly, The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul *only*, not Christ whom he sins against, Prov. ix. 12. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* All sin is against the mind and honour of Christ, but no sin is against his happiness. If all the creatures did conspire against him, it could not make the least diminution of his happiness, or in the least disturb him. Thy unbelief is like one's rushing his head against a rock, which can only hurt the person himself, Job xxxv. 6. *If thou finnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?*

I shall conclude this subject with some inferences.

1. All unbelievers, rejecters of Christ, are self-murderers; they ruin their own souls, Ezek. xviii. 31. When it comes to pass that thy soul perishes, and inquiry is made, by whose hands it has fallen, there will be the decision, Hos. xiii. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;* not Adam, not Satan, but thou thyself, O sinner.

2. Ye cannot do your own souls a worse turn than not to receive Christ by faith. Many an ill turn ye have done them by swearing, lying, covetousness, &c. but this is a stab to the heart; this is wounding the soul in the most sensible, in the most noble part.

3. All unbelievers will be inexcusable. Pagans will have something to say, that the revelation of the way of salvation through Christ was not made to them; yea devils will have it to say, that there was no remedy prepared for them. But what wilt thou have to say for thyself, O unbeliever, who treadest under foot the blood of the Redeemer! Thou wilt be wholly without excuse. Thou wilt be like the man that sat down at the table, at the marriage of the king's son, without a wedding-garment, who when asked, how he came there not having a wedding-gar-

ment, was speechless, having no excuse to alledge for his presumptuous behaviour.

4. Believe in, accept of, embrace, and close with Christ, as ye would not ruin your own souls. Refuse not the remedy that is freely provided for you in Christ. Ye are all invited and welcome to come unto Christ for salvation from sin, and from the wrath that is to come. By accepting of Christ ye shall be saved, and your souls shall have communion with God. But if ye believe not, you shall perish, and the wrath of God shall lie on you for ever. *He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned,* Mark xvi. 16.

5. Lastly, Saints and believers, in as far as ye admit unbelief, ye wrong your own souls. Every act of unbelief is a doing violence to your souls, and hurting them in their most essential interests. O then guard against this dreadful and deceitful enemy, that seeks your ruin. Daily exercise faith in Christ, improve it by vigorous and repeated exercise; and continually cry unto the Lord, saying, *Lord, increase our faith.* Live by faith, walk by faith, and, in the strength of Christ, resist all the assaults of unbelief; and in due time ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Always bear in mind, and never forget, that *he that sinneth against Christ, wrongeth his own soul,* and is in love with death; whereas he that honoureth him by believing in his name, and is strong in the faith, giving glory to God, shall be safe amidst all the troubles and trials of this world, in every period and stage of life, and shall at last be received into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where happiness for ever dwells, and the voice of violence and wrong is never heard.

Believers a Mystery, with a Description
of their Travels from the Wilderness of
this World, to the heavenly Canaan,
leaning upon Christ.

The substance of several sermons preached at Etterick,
June 18. 1721, and subsequent Sabbaths.

SONG viii. 5.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?

WE have been solemnizing our souls espousals to Jesus Christ *, and our consent to the gospel-call, saying in effect to us, *Wilt thou go with this man?* Leave thy father's house, and thine own people, and cleave to the King of Zion. We have before angels and men answered, We will go with him, for he is our Beloved. Here we have an account of the Christian life, which must be our life, if we will deal honestly with him: it is *a coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved*. These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, containing,

1. An inquiry about a party, whom they took particular notice of, namely, the church of believers, the spouse of Christ: *Who is this?* It intimates a kind of surprise, *Who's that!* The wilderness uses not to afford such a sight as this. It imports an admiration as of some hidden thing, a mystery: *Who is this?* This is a strange kind of personage whom we see.
2. A character of the party inquired about. It is

* viz. June 11. 1721, when the author preached from Psal. lxxxix. 19, which discourse is printed at the end of the *View of the covenant of works*.

a woman, one of the weak sex, as the church of believers is represented in scripture. She is not one of the dwellers in the wilderness. She appears not to have built her house there. She is but a traveller through it, and her head is awayward from it: and she is set for another country. That is she whom we mean, who is *coming up from the wilderness*. I make no question but by the *wilderness* here is meant the *world*, as Cant. iii. 6. & iv. 8. with a plain eye to the Israelites coming through the wilderness to Canaan; the last of which, as it was typical of heaven, so the former is of the world.

But for the further understanding of these words, it is necessary to take notice of a custom among the Jews at their marriages, to which there is here a manifest allusion, *viz.* The bridegroom used to take his bride, and carry her out of the city into the fields, and there they had their nuptial-songs; and afterward he brought her back again, leaning on him, into the city, to his father's house, and there the marriage was solemnized. Now we may be sure however, that these fields were not a wilderness or moorlands, no fit place for a bridegroom and bride's walk together. This then increases the wonder, What a bride is this that is coming up out of the wilderness with her Bridegroom, leaning on him! Others use to be entertained more softly, and delicately; what a bride and Bridegroom are these! However here is represented the Christian life, the life of the church of believers espoused to Christ. In which observe two things.

1st, Her exercise: she is travelling, upon her road away with her espoused husband, namely, Christ. The place she is going from is the wilderness-world; the place she is going to appears, from what is said, to be her Bridegroom's Father's house. Her way is upward, her motion an ascending, as the word imports; and here should rather be read *going up*, than *coming up*, as Judg. xx. 21. since the decency of the parable

parable requires it, she being rather going from the place where the daughters of Jerusalem were, than to the place where they were.

2dly, Her posture, her travelling posture; *leaning on her Beloved*. This is what in New-Testament language is called *the life of faith*: for that is the spiritual leaning of the soul, and imports a fiducial persuasion. It bears, (1.) Her having her Bridegroom's company through the wilderness. He leaves her not there alone; he bids her go no where but where he himself will go with her. (2.) Her having his help up through the wilderness. She leans on him, as a weak woman on a journey leans upon her husband.

Three doctrines offer themselves from the words.

DOCT. I. *True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.*
Who is this!

DOCT. II. *The life of believers, as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.*

DOCT. III. *The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith.*

I shall illustrate and apply the first two of these doctrines distinctly, and consider the third in a word of direction in the application of the second.

DOCT. I. *True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.*
Who is this!

In discoursing this subject, I shall,
I. Premise some things for right understanding the doctrine.

II. Shew in what respects believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.

III. Give the reasons of the point.

IV. Apply.

I. I shall premise some things for right understanding the doctrine.

1. Sin turned this world into an enemy's country in respect of heaven, and so into a wilderness. It was originally the seat of the friend of God, the confederate of heaven, innocent Adam; and then it was a pleasant land. But sin entering, it changed masters, so that the devil is become *the god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and it a wilderness, because the primitive communication betwixt heaven and it is stopt, and a new one settled betwixt hell and this world.

2. All men by their first birth are natives of this world; their father's house is in it, the people of it are the people that are theirs, Psal. xlv. 10. And *home is home, be it never so homely*; they love the wilderness, they desire not to change, they know no better country, and they seek none better. They are pleased with the place, the company, and the manner of living; for they are all natural to them.

3. The Lord from eternity having set his love upon some of the natives, in due time comes in the gospel into the wilderness-world, and making love to them, gains their consent, and is espoused to them in the everlasting marriage-covenant, according to Hos. ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving kindness, and in mercies.* If. xliv. 5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's.* Thus he becomes theirs, and they his, and they are engaged to follow him whithersoever he goes. Not only are they obliged by their contract of espousals to go with him, but their hearts are so set upon him, that they cannot think of parting with him again, or staying behind him.

4. Though the espousals and the feast of espousals are

are held in the wilderness, yet the place set for the consummating of the marriage is Christ's Father's house in Canaan above, to which he begins immediately to carry his bride. She must no longer be a residenter in the world, a dweller in the wilderness, but must lift her heart and affections off her own people, and her father's house, and be going away homeward to Christ's Father's house, that the marriage may be consummated.

5. This her going away up from the wilderness with her espoused Husband, is a going away in heart and affections ; it is the soul's motion heavenwards in this life, the last step of which is made at death. It is a gracious frame of heart, shining forth in a holy, tender, and heavenly walk. Every step in the way of holiness, in mortification, vivification, and contempt of the world, is a step homeward to Christ's Father's house.

6. *Lastly*, Christ's bride at her waygoing, and ongoing with him thus, is a mystery, a strange sight in the world. Her own country-people gaze at her, to see her undertaking such a strange journey, turning her back on the beloved world, and setting out for a strange country. Sometimes believers fall out of the exercise of grace, become untender in their walk, and grow so like the world, that they do not appear to be going up out of the wilderness, but rather pitching their tents there. But when they are in the exercise of grace, holy and heavenly in their walk, then do the spectators make the question, *Who is this?* Like the Jewish rulers, who *seeing the boldness of Peter and John, and perceiving that they were ignorant and unlearned men, marvelled, and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*, Acts iv. 13.

II. I shall shew in what respects believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world ; the power of godliness appearing in their walk at this rate, so that it is said of them, *Who is this !*

1. There

1. There is something very amiable about them, as we are told of the primitive Christians, Acts ii. 46. 47. that *they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.* There is a conscience within worldly men, as well as corruption; and what their corruptions will condemn, their consciences will approve as lovely, 2 Cor iv. 2. Mens corruptions may get the management of their tongue, hands, and their whole external behaviour, and may set the man to run down piety, and the party in whom it appears: yet in the mean time conscience within their breasts will be applauding and admiring the godly man, as one who has something very lovely about him, as Balaam did in the case of the Israelites, Numb. xxiii.

9 10.

2. There is something very awful about them to beholders. Paul stands at the bar and reasons, and Felix sitting on the bench trembles, Acts xxiv. 25. John Baptist lies in his grave beheaded at Herod's command, and yet there he is a terror to Herod, Matth. xiv. 1. 2. The remains of God's image on man in point of dominion, has an awe and majesty with it, that affects the brutes, Gen. ix. 2. How much more has the restored image of God in righteousness and holiness shining forth in a Christian's life, a majesty with it, procuring an internal reverence to them from beholders! They are to them like men of another world, and every view they take of such writes death to them, Heb xi. 7.

3. There is something very mysterious about them, Zech. iii. 8. They are like foreigners in a country, apt to become a gazing-stock, a wonder, about which the natives cannot satisfy themselves. A believer marching heavenward, away from this wilderness-world, is,

(1.) A mystery to the men of the world, whether professors

professors or profane. They cannot comprehend them, for they are God's *hidden ones*, Psal. lxxxiii. 3. not hid from their bodily eyes, ver. 4. but from the eyes of their minds. What a mystery is that man to them, who sets his feet and treads on that, which they set their hearts on and adore? who values, pursues eagerly, and by no means can be brought to part with, that which they can see no beauty in? whose principles, aims, and actions are diametrically opposite to those of theirs? They are to them like men of another mould and make, which they cannot understand. Nay, they are,

(2.) A mystery to themselves, ay, so great many times, that they know not what to make of themselves, what class to rank themselves in, whether of saints or sinners, Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24. A true Christian is indeed a bundle of mysteries; he on earth, and his Head in heaven, yet really and truly united! John xv. 5. ; *crucified with Christ, yet living: living, yet not he, but Christ living in him*, Gal. ii. 20. ; not loitering, but labouring, yet not *he*, but *the grace of God with him*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. He is a man of two leading contrary principles, having a will and not a will to one and the same thing; he *sins*, and yet it is not *he*, Rom. vii. 17. He has many spots and stains on him, yet is all *fair*, Cant. iv. 7.; *black, yet comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon*, chap. i. 5.; wanting many things, yet *complete*, Col. ii. 10. What wonder such a one be in way of admiration inquired about, *Who is this!*

III. I shall give the reasons of the point, That true believers are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.

1. Because they are so unlike the world, they are like speckled birds among the rest, 1 Pet. iv. 4. They are cast into the new mould of regeneration, and are come forth nonconformists to the world, Rom. xii. 2. They have got another spirit, than the spirit which all their people and their father's house are act-ed

ed by, which casts their whole conversation into a quite other shape than theirs, Numb. xiv. 24. So the unlikeness betwixt them makes them a strange sight.

2. Because they are so unlike themselves in former times. Saul among the prophets was a strange sight, 1 Sam. x. 11. But the grace of God makes a more wonderful change in a man from what he was before, as appears in Saul among the apostles, 1 Tim. i. 12. 13. What an observable change was there, that *he which persecuted the saints in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed!* Gal. i. 23. Grace makes lambs of lions, casts out the dumb devil, that they who cared not for praying, preaching, &c. but all these things were a burden to them, they cannot for the world live without them. It makes a new heart, a new life, a new man, *all things new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

3. Because they are very rare in the world; they are but here and there one for a marvel, Jer. iii. 14. The multitude in the world prefer the wilderness to Zion, and sit still in their native land, and will not go away with Christ. They have the gospel-call, they are courted to match with Christ; but they think gospel-invitations but idle tales, and they have beloveds of their own in the wilderness, which they will not part with for him. Some say with the mouth, they will take him, and subscribe with the hand at solemn ordinances; but it is not a match, for their hearts were never truly for it; so they sit still too, and go not up with him out of the wilderness, but their carcases fall there. So that they who are going up out of the wilderness, being so rare, are a strange sight.

USE I. of information. It informs us, that,

1. Serious souls need not think it strange, if they become a wonder to many, Psal. lxxi. 7. They are not meet to go up with Christ from the wilderness, that are not content to become a world's wonder for him.

him. They must be fools for Christ that will be wise : Mark viii. ult. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* Worldly men wonder at seriousness now, what makes the saints so nice in points of truth and holiness : but that wonder will not last long, the world will soon see they had good reason for it all.

2. The world is no idle spectator of those who have given themselves to Christ, and profess to follow him. They take notice of them, and have their questions about them. Communicants, take heed to yourselves ; many eyes are on you, as to your after-walk ; God's eye is on you ; the world's eyes will be upon you, they will take notice whether ye turn your back on the world, the ways and manners of it, or even sit still with yourselves as before.

3. Those who shall still walk after the course of the world, continue sons of earth, not making away heavenward in their tenor of life and conversation, are not espoused to Christ ; though they have given him the band, they have not given him the heart. The sincerity of your covenanting with God, is now to be proved by your after-walk. If God be your Father, be setting homeward to his house. If Christ be your espoused husband, make away with him through the wilderness, and stay not behind. The friendship of the world is enmity to God.

4. *Lastly,* This world must be little worth, wherein, among such multitudes, there are so few such travellers, that they are a strange sight. There are many sad sights to be seen in the world, even after communions, but few of this sort, of persons turning their backs on the world, and resolutely walking heavenwards. Take heed, Christians and communicants, that one of these three questions be not put concerning you, instead of this in the text. (1.) Who is this standing still in the wilderness ? like the door

on

on the hinges, oft moving, but never going forward, as proud, passionate, carnal, and sensual, as before? If. v. 6. (2) Who is this going back from the wilderness to Egypt, to the flesh-pots there? back again to their profane and licentious courses? Better ye had never known the way of righteousness. (3.) Who is this sticking in some mire, fallen into some pit in the wilderness; some gross and scandalous abomination? Many such trophy gets Satan set up.

USE II. of exhortation. O Christians, communicants, walk so as the world may bear witness, that ye are going up out of the wilderness, leaning on your Beloved; that your faces and hearts are heavenward; that ye have set off from them, and are no more theirs.

This would be much to the honour of Christ and religion, Acts iv. 13. It would be a great kindness to the world lying in wickedness, as an apt mean to bring others away with you, Zech. viii. ult. It would be the safety and comfort of your own souls, Cant. viii. 4.

Ye will walk so, if ye be habitually heavenly in the frame of your heart, like Enoch walking with God. Also, if in your conversation ye manifest a contempt of the world: *Germana illa bestia non curat aurum*, was Luther's character from his enemies. Likewise, if ye be just in your dealings in the world to a niceness, counting it always safer to lose a pound, than unjustly to gain a small penny. And further, if ye be clothed with humility and with humanity, meek, ruling your own spirits, doing good to all, even to those that wrong you; and are patient under trouble, and living by faith.

Doct. II. *The life of believers, as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.*

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

- I. Take notice of some things supposed in it.

II. Unfold

II. Unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderness of this world, typified by the Israelites going up from the wilderness to Canaan.

III. Make application.

I. I shall take notice of some things supposed in this doctrine. It supposes, that,

1. As soon as a soul is espoused to Christ, it is loosed from the world. Its taking of him is a letting this world go, Matth. xiii. 44. The unbeliever hugs and embraces this world as his portion, and pursues it as the main thing: but when he closeth with Christ, he faith, *Thou art my portion*, and the esteem of the world sinks, Phil. iii. 8. Those that are espoused to Christ, are,

(1.) A loosed people. The bands with which the world held them, are loosed; they gripe not it, nor it them, at the rate they formerly gripped one the other, Gal. vi. 14. While the sinner was without Christ, the profits and pleasures of the world were strong bands, which they could not get shaken off: but in the day of the power of converting grace, these give way, as tow does when touched with the fire. Then Christ says, *Loose him, and let him go;* all is nothing in comparison of Christ.

(2.) A separated people. Though before they made one body with the world lying in wickedness, and were possessed with the same spirit of the world; yet, in the day of their espousals to Christ, they are fairly separated from them, 2 Cor. vi. 17. even as a married woman ceases to be any more a member of her father's family, but becomes a member of her husband's, Psal. xlv. 10.

(3.) A new people. They are no more *men of the world*, though in it, Psal. xvii. 14. but *heavenly men*, 1 Cor. xv. 48. They have *another spirit*, Numb. xiv. 24. a new principle, ends, motives, and manner of life.

2. The soul espoused to Christ, being loosed from the world, is set in motion heavenwards, away from

the world, Psal. lxxxiv. 5. 6. 7. That soul has begun a new journey, is set off in the Christian race, that it may obtain the crown. Those that are in heaven have come to a fixed point of happiness: those in hell have come to a fixed point in misery: as to those that are in the wilderness of this world, some of them are sitting still as in Sodom, till the fire of God fall on them and consume them: others, even true believers, are making away, as Lot out of Sodom, and as the Israelites out of the wilderness into Canaan.

3. The believer's journeying heavenwards is attended with many difficulties. It is an up-going, and that through a wilderness. They that mind for heaven, must forego their own ease, and lay their account with troubles and trials of many sorts. The way to destruction is broad and easy: if men will but sit still, they will be carried quickly down the stream into the ocean of an eternity of wo. But if one minds for heaven, he must force his way through many difficulties, Matth. vii. 13. 14. & xi. 12.

4. The believer's passage to heaven is also a work of time. It is not a leaping out of the wilderness into Canaan, but a going up out of it by degrees. It cost Israel long forty years in the wilderness. And the believer is longer or shorter kept in the wilderness, as seems meet to his God. Some are not long set upon the way, when they are at their journey's end: others it costs many a weary look to be at home.

5. Christ is with the believer in the journey. It is a weary land they have to go through, but they are not alone in it, Cant. iv. 8. In the day the soul is espoused to Christ, he is united to him spiritually, and that union once made is never broken again. So that where-ever it is the believer's lot to go, Christ is with him, if it were through fire and water, If xlivi. 2. He is never so far from him, but that his faith may get hold of him, and he may lean on him.

6. *Lastly*, The end of this journey is a most comfortable one. Though the travelling be uneasy, the designed

designed place of rest is most desirable, being Christ's Father's house, where the marriage is to be solemnized for ever, John xiv. 2. This is sufficient to bear up the heart of Christ's spouse through all the difficulties of the road, Heb. xi. 26. especially considering that Christ himself goes all along with her, Heb. xiii. 5.

II. I shall unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderness of this world, typified by the Israelites going up from the wilderness to Canaan. And here I shall shew,

1. How they are brought unto the wilderness.
2. How the believer is set into it.
3. How he is going up from it.
4. The hardships and inconveniences of the road.
5. The advantages and conveniences of it.

First, I shall shew you how believers are brought unto the wilderness. The world is not a wilderness to them and in their esteem, till they be brought out of the Egyptian bondage of their natural state. Then, and not till then, they enter into their wilderness-state. And here one may remark these six things.

1. As the Israelites who came out of Egypt, went down into it in the loins of their fathers; so the elect of God were brought into their sinful and miserable state in the loins of our first father Adam, Rom. v. 12. And we are all born in that condition, and draw our first breath in that unhappy region.

2. The natural state of the elect is a state of bondage and slavery. Satan, as Pharaoh, is their prince there, and holds them fast at their drudgery, Eph. ii. 2. 3. They have many taskmasters there; as many reigning lusts as there are in their hearts, so many taskmasters are there holding them to their work.

3. As God, by the hand of Moses the lawgiver, and Aaron the high priest, wrought the deliverance of the Israelites; so, by the law and the gospel, he carries on the deliverance of the elect out of their state of bondage. The law serves to awaken the sinner,

and shew him his danger ; the gospel discovers the remedy : and the Spirit of God makes both effectual.

4. There is no less opposition made by Satan to the sinner's deliverance from his spiritual bondage, than was by Pharaoh to the deliverance of the Israelites. He is loath to lose his subjects, loath to let his prisoners go. How often does the field seem to be won, and a fair appearance that the poor sinners shall be let go ? and yet there are new attacks to be made before he will surrender.

5. Ordinarily, whenever the deliverance is set a-foot, the bondage becomes harder than ever before, Rom. vii. 9. Satan then musters up all his forces, and rages more than ever, that he may make the soul despair of a delivery. Now is the soul hard beslead, duties are bound on by the law laid to the conscience, under the pain of the curse, but no strength afforded : so the soul sees it must make brick while no straw is given. And by this means their corruptions are irritated, that they appear more vigorously than ever before, Rom. vii. 5.

6. *Lastly*, But at the set time, over the belly of all opposition, God brings his elect out of their spiritual bondage into the wilderness. There is a set time in the purpose of God for the delivery of every elect soul ; and as at the appointed time precisely Israel was delivered, Exod. xii. 41. so are they, Jer. ii. 24. And no sooner do they comply with the gospel-call, and leave the spiritual Egypt, but as soon this world turns a wilderness unto them. And young converts may lay their account with a hot pursuit from Satan to bring them back again, even as sure as the Israelites met with it from Pharaoh. But they may be assured, that they shall get such a deliverance as the Israelites at the Red sea, which shall make them sing.

Secondly, I shall shew how the believer is set into the wilderness. When once converting grace has made a fair separation betwixt the sinner and the world, presently he enters into a wilderness-state.

1. He cares not for the world as he was wont, Gal. vi. 14. Grace opening the eyes, the world appears in its own colours, no more a fruitful field, but a barren wilderness. The pleasantest spots in it appear lions dens and mountains of leopards. Its best fruits appear as the apples of Sodom, fair to look at, but being handled fall to ashes, Psal. iv. 6. 7. He sees there is no rest for his heart in it, and therefore must look above and beyond it. The men of the world are no more his choice; their way and manner of life he can no more away with.

2. The world cares not for him as before, Gal. vi. 14. No sooner does a soul begin to look heavenward, but presently the world turns a strange world to him, John xv. 19. He must be content to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations. He bears the image which they hate, he is entered on a course opposite to theirs: and so the friendship breaks up. And he may lay his account with all the opposition they can make him with tongue and hand.

3. Then it becomes, by God's appointment, the place of trial for him, as the wilderness was to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 2. God could have taken his people a nearer way to Canaan than the way he led them; but for their trial he led them so long in the wilderness. So he could carry each believer straightway to heaven after their conversion: but he will have them pass their trials before they come there: so they must be content to take up their cross and follow him, and so long stand candidates for glory, while one trial is put to them after another, trials that will prove the reality and strength of their graces, the multiplicity of their corruptions, and remaining vigour of them.

4. *Lastly,* It is no more his home, or his rest; but the place of his pilgrimage, of his sojourning, the place he must travel through in his way home to his eternal rest, Heb. xi. 13. He must look on himself as upon a journey, one that is not to stay here, but must be going forward to the heavenly country.

Thirdly, I shall shew how the believer is going up from the wilderness. He is going up from it,

1. By the course of nature, which is swift as a post, a ship, and as an eagle's flight. It is but a little time, and believers will be at their journey's end. Every day sets them a good way nearer their eternal rest, Rom. xiii. 11. If the days be evil, they are but few, and will soon be over. It is true, that by this way the wicked are going out from the world too, but they are not going up, but down into destruction.

2. In the habitual bent of his heart and affections. Believers hearts are turned off the world, and set on things above. Their face is homeward, their heart is there before them; for Christ is there, their treasure is there. Hence they are said to be those who *love Christ's appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. and *look for him*, Heb. ix. 28. So while the carnal man is glued to this world, and desires no better heaven than what is here, they are going away from it in affection and desire.

But it may be the case of some gracious souls, that they cannot say, they are thus going up from the world, nay it is a terror to them to think of going out of it. I answer, There is a twofold desire to be away from the world, and to be with Christ. (1.) There is an explicit desire, like a rose full spread. Such was that of Paul, Phil. i. 23. *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ*. This is found in believers, when they are not only in the exercise of grace, but have a full assurance of their eternal salvation. This makes the soul go up with full sail out of the world. (2.) An implicit desire, which is like a rose-bud, where the leaves are to be found, if it be opened, though in the mean time they are covered, not being yet so ripe as to spread. This is found in believers, if they be at all in the exercise of grace, although they be in the dark as to their state. It is found in the groaning believer, who is groaning under the remains of sin, and would fain be free from them, groaning under want

of

of communion with God, and would fain have it, and that so as not to be interrupted any more, Rom. vii. 24. The Lord reads the language of these groans so, and there wants only a full assurance of eternal happiness to make it plain language to the soul itself. See 2 Cor. v. 4. And thus the believer is going up from the wilderness, though with the wind in his face.

3. In progressive sanctification, Prov. iv. 18. By faith the soul is set on the way to Immanuel's land: it knits him to Christ the personal way, it sets him to holiness of heart and life, the real way, or the walking in the way, Col. ii. 6. And the believer goes on while he goes forward in holiness, especially when he is growing, adding a cubit to his spiritual stature, 2 Pet. iii. *ut*. This going up appears,

(1.) In mortification, when the believer is dying to sin, getting his former lusts weakened, Rom. viii. 13. Mortification is the daily task of a believer: the weeds of corruption in the heart are never so plucked up, but they will be ready to sprout again. These Canaanites are left in the land, that the believer may never be idle, but watch their motions and bear them down.

(2.) In vivification, in living to righteousness, when the soul holds toward in the way of duty over the belly of all opposition, especially in a holy and heavenly frame, going on in them with vigour, whether it be doing work or suffering work, Cant. iii. 6. The soul married to Christ is to be *for him*, according to the law of marriage, Hos. iii. 3. As we live by him, so we must live to him. This was Paul's practice, Phil i. 21. *To me to live is Christ.* More particularly,

4. In obtaining victory over the world, 1 John v. 4. The world is an enemy to all that are set to go up from it. And many times it prevails to retard their course: they are in it travelling in a stony, yea and thorny way, where there are many things to take hold of them, and hold them still: so that they are in hazard of being entangled in the wilderness.

In

In this respect a believer goes up from the wilderness. And O but the picture of a believer thus going up from the wilderness is a beautiful one, Cant. iii. 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?* I shall essay to draw it in a few particulars. A believer espoused to Christ, and thus going up from the wilderness-world, is,

1. One who is keeping off from mixing with the men of the world, the natives of the weary land. Converting grace plucks them out from among them, and sets them over to Christ's side; and establishing grace keeps them from mixing again, Psal. xii. 7. There is a generation of God's wrath in the world, and they are labouring to save themselves from them, Acts ii. 40. They are deserters of their company, shunning unnecessary fellowship with them; for they know, that *a companion of fools shall be destroyed*, Prov. xiii. 20. And they consort with those who are followers of the Lamb, companions of those that fear God.

2. He is holding off from the ways of the world, Psal. xvii. 4. In the wilderness-world there are many ways, all of them leading to and terminating in some part of the wilderness; some to the world's wealth, honours, peace, &c. But there is one way that leads out of it, and terminates in the heavenly Canaan. The throng of the world goes in these many ways: but the believers, and they only, take the pilgrim's way, which does but lie through it, neither beginning nor ending in the country; and the grass may grow on it for the natives, they never set a foot on it, Is. xxxv. 8. The men of the world ply them to turn them aside, and take their way; and if they catch them napping, they readily get them off: but the traveller towards Zion says as Israel to the king of Edom, *We will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left*, Numb. xx. 17.

3. He

3. He has a low esteem of the world's wisdom, and holds off from it as from a false light that would lead the traveller into a quagmire, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 19. Carnal wisdom has often been the ruin of Christ's interests in the church, and in the private case of Christians; leading into a betraying of truth and purity; procuring outward peace, but wounding one's conscience, and dishonouring God. But they that are going up from the wilderness, will be no admirers of the world's judgement in the matter of truth and error, sin and duty: for the generality of men have ever been, and will be, in that case, blind-men judging of colours. And it is a dangerous thing to be carried away with the stream, Eph. ii. 2. A man that has no heart to keep off a way, because it is a way that is in vogue in the world, and will always row with the stream, is not going up from the wilderness. The fear of the world's putting the fool's cap on one's head, makes many a carcase fall in the wilderness.

4. He is keeping up a holy contempt of the world's good things, Heb. xi. 24. 25. Its profits and pleasures are sinking in their value with him; he counts them *but loss and dung, that he may win Christ*, Phil. iii. 8. To a gracious soul going up from the wilderness, the best things the world can afford, are so lightly esteemed, that he will not think them worth pains to go off the King's high-way for them, as Numb. xx. 17. *We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells;* while others allured with these baits, fall into one mire after another, and quit the travelling company, as Demas did Paul.

5. He is resolute to make his way through the world's ill things, to follow the way of God through good and bad report, Rev. xiv. 4. He is neither to be bribed nor boasted by the world out of the way of his duty, Cant. viii. 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give*

give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. His feet are fiod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and blow what weather it will, he must hold on till he be at his journey's end.

6. *Lastly*, His eyes are upon the other world; they are fixed on the prize, and running that they may obtain it, Heb. xi. 26. Their conversation is in heaven; they are habitually minding heavenly things; their affections are set not on things on the earth, but on the things that are above. But I proceed to consider,

Fourthly, The hardships and inconveniences of the wilderness-road, which the believer must lay his account with, while he goes up from the wilderness.

1. It is a weary land which the traveller has to go through, while he is going up from the wilderness, Is. xxxii. 2. David calls the whole of it, *the house of his pilgrimage*. However lightly the natives, the men of the earth, may live in it, there is never one born from above that is travelling through it, but it is a weary land to them. It was a weary time the Israelites had of it in the wilderness; their patience soon began to wear out. And there is never a child of God, but sometime or other he has his fill of it, and being wearied longs to be at home. The Son of God himself, we find, wearied here, John iv. 6.

2. It is a road that lies through a waste, affording no provision, Deut. xxxii. 10. When sin entered into the world, a withering curse followed on the back of sin, and turned the pleasant land into a waste, barren place. There was a blessing in every thing in it before, but now every thing is embittered in it. There is enough to raise the appetite of lusts, there are husks enough for them to feed on: but there is nothing in it to fill the soul, that is the produce of the country: and therefore the natives, though they are always feeding, they are never full. The Israelites would have starved in the wilderness, if they had not been furnished from another quarter; for there was neither meat nor drink there for them.

3. It

3. It is an howling wilderness which they have to go through, Deut. xxxii. 10. because of the wild beasts that haunt there, Cant. iv. 8. devils, and wicked men influenced by the devil. Sometimes the traveller must hear them roaring, Psal. lxxiv. 4. threatening to devour and swallow them up, and to make the name of Israel no more to be remembered, as the Egyptian wild beast did, Exod. xv. 9. *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.* Sometimes he is entertained with their yellings, Jer. ii. 15. Their blasphemies, reproaches against God and his cause, their contradicting of the truths of religion, what are they but yellings of the wilderness, as ungrateful to holy ears as the yellings of beasts in the night? Sometimes he must find them tearing him, his name, reputation, substance, yea and his flesh sometimes, Psal. xxxv. 15. 16.

4. They must lay their account with scorching heats in it. Such was the wilderness to Israel, for which a cloud covered them by day. While they are upon the road through the wilderness, they are liable to fiery heats of desertion from heaven; to fiery heats of temptation from hell, Eph. vi. 16. fiery trials of persecution from men, 1 Pet. iv. 12. and fiery heats of contention and division, the fire coming from the altar, Rev. viii. 5. All which make travelling Zion-ward to be very hard; and the more hard, the greater these heats are; which puts the spouse of Christ to that prayer, Cant. i. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.*

5. It is a sickly place through which their way lieth. Many a groan was in the wilderness while Israel was in it: sometimes there were fiery serpents biting them, and sometimes a plague consuming them, so as many carcases fell in the wilderness. No less sickly a place is this world to the spiritual travellers. It is a heavy disease that is on them there,
even

even a whole body of death, Rom. vii, 24. It affects and indisposes the whole man. They are liable to frequent relapses; and O the malignant influence it has on their journey, unfitting them for it, and at best causing them to go up but very slowly!

6. It is a difficult way through the wilderness. The road the travellers must go will try their patience, their strength, &c. They that must needs have an easy way through the wilderness, must take the way that leads down to the pit, not the way that leads up to Immanuel's land.

(1.) It is all upward, which scares most men at it, Psal. xxiv. 3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* The way to heaven is up the hill, the way to hell down the hill.

(2.) It is a narrow way, Matth. vii. 14. Multitudes walk in the broad way, and there they get room enough, life room, heart-room, conscience-room. But the King's highway has no such room in it, which obliges the travellers to take good heed to their feet, Eph. v. 15. And considering how rash we are naturally, how weak-headed, false-hearted, how narrow the road is, how loose the ground about it is, it is no great wonder that many of the travellers catch such falls, as make them go halting to the grave, Psal. li. 8.

(3.) It is a hard and rugged way; and therefore they must have leg-harness, as soldiers had to preserve their feet from stones and roughness in the way of their march, Eph. vi. 15. There are many difficulties to go through, which will need resolution and undaunted courage.

(4.) It is a way wherein many snares are laid for them. In every lot in the world, and in the most innocent things, there are snares wherewith we may be caught. And sometimes men are busy making snares for us in the way wherein we walk.

7. It is a very solitary road, there is not much company to be got in it, Matth. vii. 14. Israel travelled

velled alone through the wilderness, save that a mixed multitude joined with them, that they were much the worse of, and whose carcases fell in the wilderness. See how Micah complains for want of company on the road, *Wo is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit,* Micah vii. 1. In Elijah's days there were so very few upon the road, that he thought he had been alone upon it; he had so little help of the seven thousand, that he knew not of them, Rom. xi. 3. 4. At this rate the spiritual traveller has few,

(1.) To take a lift of his burden, Gal. vi. 2. Alas! we are in a strange world, where there are many to lay a load above the burden, but few to take a lift of it.

(2.) To consult with when he comes to a difficult step. There are many such steps that Christians will meet with in their way to Zion, especially when a mist rises in the wilderness. And it is no small mercy to have honest and tender men to advise with, and to have their sympathy and prayers. But of all these there is great scarcity in the wilderness.

8. Lastly, It is a road, wherein they must meet with armed enemies come forth to attack them, and ruin them. Pharaoh and his army pursued the Israelites in the wilderness, Exod. xiv. 3. Amalek fought them, chap. xvii. 8. both types of the devil and his agents. The Christian life is a fighting life, 2 Tim. iv. 7. All is not done when they are converted, they must fight their way through the wilderness to Canaan, and so fight as to overcome, Rev. iii. 21. The concluding of their peace with God in Christ, is proclaiming of war against the devil, the world, and the flesh: so they must put on their armour, if they would make their way through the wilderness.

Fifthly, I now come to shew the advantages and conveniences of the wilderness-road. The people of God, while in the wilderness-world, have as much

allowed them from heaven as may balance the hardships of the wilderness.

1. The pillar of cloud to go before them in the wilderness; of which we have an account, Exod. xiii. 20. 21. 22. *And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light: to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.* It was a type of Christ. He leaves them not alone in the wilderness-world. Our Lord Christ is upon the head of the travelling company, Cant. iv. 8. and will be so till he have them all home. And this is sufficient to compensate the solitariness of the way.

The pillar seems to have been a fiery cloud, Exod. xiv. 20.; the cloud representing Christ's human nature, the fire his divine nature: and to have been but one pillar, Numb. ix. 15. 16.; Christ one person in two distinct natures. A God veiled with flesh, is the believer's company in the wilderness at all times: and even the man Christ travelled the wilderness-road himself too.

It had a dark side to their enemies, but a light side to the Israelites, Exod. xiv. 20. Believers see a glory in Christ which the blind world sees nothing of, and therefore will not go up with him from the wilderness. The carnal world wonders at the believer's waygoing from the wilderness: alas! they see not what he sees, the light side of the cloud goes before.

Now the cloudy pillar had a fourfold use to the Israelites in the wilderness, in a spiritual sense made good by Christ to his people in the wilderness-world.

(1.) They had the signal for marching or halting from it, Numb. ix. 17. &c. Their motions were directed by its motions. Thus the travellers from the wilderness-world are directed by Jesus Christ their Lord

Lord and Head, on whom the trust of bringing them safe to glory is devolved, Is. lv. 4. *Behold, I have given him for—a leader and commander to the people.* They must not stir till he give them the sign, though all the world, friends or foes, should cry, March: if they presume to do it, the cloud of glory will stay behind them, and they will find themselves entangled in the wilderness. They must not sit still when he gives them the sign to march, though all the world, friends or enemies, should cry, Halt: if they do, they will find the cloud of glory will leave them, and their rest be blasted. Here lies their safety in the wilderness; in observing the word from Heaven.

(2.) It led them in the way, Exod. xiii. 21. They would soon have missed their way in the pathless wilderness. So our Lord Christ leads his people in their way through the wilderness-world, If. lv. 4. In the wilderness there are many by-ways, many to lead the travellers off the way, besides a wandering disposition in their own nature. They will never get through safe, who take the guiding of themselves; but they who keep their eye on the cloud of glory before them, shall get through the most difficult steps of the wilderness-road, Prov. iii. 5. 6.

He leads his people through the wilderness, (1.) By his word, which they must take good heed to, as that which determines the way, Is. xxx. 21. By his word he chalks out the path through the wilderness, and whatever agrees not therewith is but a by-way, it is not the King's highway, Is. viii. 20. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* (2.) By his example, which is the marks of his own feet upon the way, 1 Pet. ii. 21. These we should narrowly observe, that we may follow them: hence says our Lord himself, Matth. xi. 29. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* We are apt to follow example; whose example should be so dear to us as his, who is our Father, Master, Husband? &c. That we

might know how to walk through the wilderness, God himself came down from heaven, and in our nature walked through it. (3.) By his providence, which duly compared with the word, contributes much to clear the way, Psal. xxxii. 8. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* Ye are to be then careful observers of providences, which are really way-marks in the wilderness, Psal. cvii. ult. (4.) By his Spirit, which renders all the rest effectual, John xvi. 13. *When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* He illuminates and causes to shine, the word, Christ's example, and providences. He illuminates the traveller too, as well as the way; disposes, moves, and efficaciously leads the traveller on his way.

(3.) It was a shelter to them from the heat of the sun by day, Psal. cv. 39. And so Christ shelters his people from the scorching heats in the wilderness, Is. xxxii. 2. & iv. 6. Let the heat of desertion, temptation, contention with men, and persecution, be never so great; Christ looked to by faith will be a sufficient sconce, Cant. i. 7. Many a time the gourds of created comforts are withered when the sun is hottest in the wilderness. Sons of men are found vanity and a lie. But Christ's shadow is ever broad and refreshing, Cant. ii. 3. and the traveller can never come amiss to it.

(4.) It was a light to them by night, Exod. xiii. 21. There is many a dark night in the wilderness; and it is sometimes the lot of the people of God to travel in the night, as well as it was that of Israel, Numb. ix. 21. But Christ is a light to them in the darkest hour of the night; hence David could say, Psal. xxviii. 4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* Sometimes the sun shines fair, and then there is no debate about the way: at other times a mist and darkness sits down on the wilderness, and then many

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are put to a stand; then is a time of wandering, stumbling, falling over this and the other precipice in the wilderness. Many are lying fallen, and others come up and fall over them; and all because of the darkness. What way can one get through in such a time? Why, let them keep their eye on Christ the pillar of fire, and they shall have light in the midst of darkness, Job xxix. 3.

2. They have provision allowed them from heaven in the waste wilderness. And that must balance the scarcity and want there. The King's country affords them provision for their journey. Israel in the wilderness were provided both with meat and drink; and so are they that are going up from the wilderness of this world. In the wilderness there is,

(1.) Manna for them to eat, even Jesus Christ, to be fed on spiritually, John vi. 48.—51. the only bread that can satisfy a soul. When the Egyptian provision is spent, the soul can no longer feed on the husks of the world, then the manna falls, the soul tastes the sweetnes of Christ, in his person, offices, and benefits. It falls down about their tent-doors in the word of the everlasting gospel, exhibiting Christ with all his benefits to the soul: and it is gathered and ate by the application of saving faith, believing Christ to be offered, and taking Christ to itself, believing that it shall have life and salvation by him. And the more close, confident, and assured this application is, and the less mixed with doubting, the more the soul is fed.

(2.) Water out of the rock for them to drink, Exod. xvii. 6. This *Rock is Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 4. The Israelites might have perished in the wilderness for want of water, had it not been brought out of the rock: so had sinners perished, but that the blood of Christ was shed for their life. Behold Christ smitten by the law, before he could be drink to our souls.—Costly provision for the travellers! this is their provision till they come to Canaan's land.

3. Sometimes they are allowed a song in the weary land, for their comfort and recreation by the way, Psal. cxix. 54. *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.* We find Israel in the wilderness often complaining, groaning, and mourning; that is the ordinary in the wilderness-world; but seldom singing, that is reserved for the exercise in the promised land. Yet I find Israel singing in the wilderness three times.

(1.) At their entry into the wilderness, just after they came out from the Red sea, Exod. xv. So young converts frequently have a parcel of pleasant days at their first setting off in the wilderness-journey, Hos. ii. 14. Religion is new to them; they are like men newly brought out of a dark dungeon, to whom the light has a double sweetness; and the Lord even so deals with them, as fathers with their children who are learning to go, holding out an apple to them, which they are not to expect when they are more confirmed: and further, it is even to fit them for the hardships which they are afterwards to meet with.

(2.) When they were far on in the wilderness, and had been long in it, they sang upon the occasion of God's giving them a well without their complaining, or so much as asking for it, Numb. xxi. 17. *Then Israel sang this song; Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it.* Many a heavy day had gone over their head between that and the last song they had had, (I reckon on not their song at the idolatry of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 18. which ended in sorrow). The fiery serpents had been among them a little before. Yet God made them sing again. Thus sometimes God surprises the travellers with mercy after many a heavy day, that they think they will never sing more, and their souls have forgotten joy: yet he causes them take down their harps from the willows, and puts a new song in their mouth; while he causes the wells of salvation spring up to them.

(3.) In their last station in the wilderness, when they

they were encamping by Jordan, before they passed it, Deut. xxxi. 22. and chap. xxxii. It was forty years betwixt this and their first song. Thus they may have a weary time of it through the wilderness, who yet, when they come to the Jordan of death, shall be made to sing there, the sweetest song that ever they sang, like the swan singing sweetest when a dying. The nearer the rivers come to the sea, they are the sooner met by the tide. Motions in nature are so much the swifter as they come nearer the centre. And it may be a very cloudy day in which the sun shall shine brightest at its setting, Zech. xiv. 6. 7.

4. The Lord is their banner in the wilderness, and so they may be sure of victory, they shall be conquerors in the war, Exod. xvii. 15. Though they must fight, yet Christ the true Joshua is upon their head; he sits in heaven, who has the balance of victory in his hand; and he is their friend, and the cause is his own. Nay, they shall be more than conquerors. Israel was armed with the spoils of the Egyptian army, and Sihon and Og's lands they got possession of. Though the believer's battle with the world, the devil, and his own corruptions be sore; yet the spoils thereby gained are sweet, Psal. lxxiv. 14. They produce sweet experiences of the Lord's goodness, Rom. v. 3. 4. Jacob was a man whose life had more trials than any of the Patriarchs; but as true it was, it had more signal experiences too.

5. There is healing in the wilderness for them, for the wounds got there. There are fiery flying serpents to bite the people there, and they cannot miss the bites of the old serpent now and then. But there is the brazen serpent to look to and be healed: the ordinance relative thereto, we have, Numb xxi. 8. 9. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent*

pent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. This wilderness-world is the haunt of the old serpent, his prevailing temptations are his bites, the guilt remaining stings and galls the conscience: but Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, and on the pole of the gospel, being looked to by faith, they are healed, *Is. xlvi. 22.* So *Is. xxxiii. ult.* *The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.* And how often soever they be bitten, still the look of faith will be a healing look.

6. *Lastly,* We must not forget the tabernacle in the wilderness, which was the comfort of the godly Israelites there. There they had their stated meetings, and when any thing more than ordinary ailed them in the wilderness, they used to draw towards the tabernacle. The tabernacle of gospel-ordinances is the great comfort of the travellers towards Zion. I shall only observe, that,

(1.) It was the place of meeting, namely, with God. The cloud of glory rested on it, and thence God spake. Gospel-ordinances are the place of meeting betwixt the Lord and his people in this wilderness-world, *Prov. viii. 34. 35.* and therefore they are even the pleasantest things in the wilderness.

(2.) It was coarse without, but rich and fine within. There was the golden candlestick, the shew-bread table, incense-altar, ark, &c. All which believers have in Christ enjoyed in the ordinances.

(3.) *Lastly,* It was a moveable and slender thing. The tabernacle of gospel-ordinances is so. But where-ever the Israelites went in the wilderness, they took the tabernacle with them. And the travellers to Zion, go where they will, dare not leave their religion, or their duties behind them. The tabernacle was often removed in the wilderness; but where it went, they went: none have a tack of the gospel; but where-ever it goes, the travellers will go after it, cost what it will. Coarse fare and hard lodging with

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the gospel, will be by them preferred to the world's advantages without it. The tabernacle was suited to the wilderness, they had no temple there, that was reserved for the promised land of rest: but in heaven they shall have it, Rev. iii. 12.

I proceed now to the practical improvement of this subject.

USE. I. Of information. From what is said we may draw the following inferences.

1. The people of God need not be surprised, that they meet with many hardships and trials in the world, and that it is a strange world to them, John xvi. ult. While they are in it, they are in a wilderness. How then can they expect other than a wilderness-life? That the desert is to be turned into a paradise, no body expects: why then look we to see the world other than a wilderness, if we mind for heaven? These things are useful,

(1.) To keep believers from sitting down in it, as their dwelling-place, Cant. iv. 8. or resting-place. A smiling world hugs many to death in its embraces: and the ease many find in it so charms the carnal heart, that the promised land is forgot, Matth. xvii. 4.

(2.) To quicken their pace out of it, and so work together for good to them, Rom. viii. 28. As a boisterous wind blowing on the back of the traveller makes him sometimes run, while otherwise he would walk: so afflictions and trials put the believer to his duty, when he would not otherwise apply to it, and wean his heart more from the world, Micah vii. 7. *Therefore I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will bear me.*

(3.) To make heaven more desirable, 2 Cor. v. 4. Their tossing they meet with on the sea of this world, makes them long for the shore, Job vii. 2. And as rest is not so sweet to any as to the weary, nor meat as to the hungry: so heaven must be the more sweet in the enjoyment, that the believer has a weary life here.

2. They

2. They have good reason to bear all the hardships of their wilderness-lot patiently, and with Christian fortitude and chearfulness. And that, (1.) Because they will not last, they will be over ere long; they are going up from the wilderness. What inconveniences are upon the road, the traveller matters not much, because he is not to stay with them. He may wonder indeed how people can dwell in a place to him so unpleasant: but it is but a light thing to him, because he is only a passenger. Indeed it is no wonder that the world's hardships be intolerable to them, who have no other portion but the things of the world: but they cannot be intolerable to the believer, who has a better portion, even one in heaven. (2.) Because the heavenly Canaan which the wilderness-road leads to, will make amends for all: *God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away,* Rev. xxi. 4. Though the way be a rugged one, it leads to a paradise. Christ's espoused bride will forget all the wilderness-hardships, when she comes home to the marriage-chamber in the Bridegroom's Father's house. (3.) Their lot is a wise mixture, take it at the worst. There are advantages allowed to balance the hardships, as ye have heard. There is no strait they can be in, in the wilderness, but there is help for it in the provision made for them there. If the wilderness be a weary land, there are statutes that may be songs to them there, &c.

3. They are not Israelites indeed, nor espoused to Christ, who are not going up from this world as a wilderness, in heart and affection, in life and conversation. And such may lay their account, that their carcases will fall in the wilderness, and they shall not see Canaan's land. And such are,

(1.) Those whose hearts were never yet loosed from this world, and married to Christ, Matth. xiii. 44.

45. When man fell off from God, he fell to the creature, and his heart was wedded to it as the spring of his content and satisfaction. All the crosses in the world will not loose this knot; only efficacious grace discovering Christ in his surpassing glory to the sinner will do it.

(2.) Those who are walking according to the course of this world, Eph. ii. 2. framing their lives by worldly principles, being acted by worldly motives, and acting for worldly ends as their chief design. Thus they are conformed to the world, which speaks them natives of the wilderness-world, not pilgrims in it. These, however their voice may be Jacob's, their hands are Esau's: though they pretend to be going heavenward, they are in the way to destruction.

The characters of that walk are,

[1.] To do as the most do, not regarding how the best do; contrary to that plain injunction, Exod xxiii. 2. *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* Thus the world is like a dunghill, where one part corrupts another, men fearlessly venturing on those courses and ways, on which they see many before them. This is the downright reverse of going up from the wilderness, being a going along with the world, from which the apostle dehorts, Rom. xii. 2. *Be not conformed to this world.*

[2.] To make the world one's business, and religion the by-hand work at best; not remembering what our Lord says, Matth. vi. 24. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* This is the way of the world, who look on their carnal interests as their chief interests, which therefore get the flower and strength of their affections. Whereas gracious souls go quite the contrary way, *counting all things but loss, yea but dung that they may win Christ,* Phil. iii. 8. And so our Lord directs us,

Matth.

Matth. vi. 33. to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

[3.] To step over conscience deliberately, to gratify lusts. Conscience among the men of the world is a very weak thing; and all its dictates, and the consideration of God's word as our rule, and God's honour as concerned in mens actions, go very short way with them. Let the unjust man see gain within his reach, and the sensual man what may please his sensual lust: though God's command, honour, and conscience be between him and them, he can step over these, tread on them all, and gratify his lust, Hos. xii. 7 8. & xiii. 6.

USE II. Of caution. While ye are in the wilderness, beware of wilderness sins and snares. And beware of,

1. Unbelief. That was a wilderness-sin of Israel's, Psal. lxxviii. 22. *They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.* Yea, it was the sin that kept the whole generation that came out of Egypt, out of Canaan, Heb. iii. 18. 19. Many that seem to have been set fair on the way to the heavenly Canaan, come short of it this way. They believe not the record that God hath given concerning his Son, and so they never embrace Christ, but perish. And the unbelief of saints while they are in the wilderness, does them much harm. It plucks away from their strength, and leaves them most unfit for the journey.

2. Murmuring, 1 Cor. x. 10. Many times God's anger was kindled against Israel for their murmurings in the wilderness. And it is incident to us in this wilderness-world, through the trials, crosses, and troubles that must be met with there. They had need of mortified affections that travel the wilderness-way, else they cannot in patience possess their souls. And when people have lost their patience, and their spirits are on the fret, every thing ruffles them, and the hard way becomes harder.

3. Lusting, 1 Cor. x. 6. Let not the loose be given

given to your hearts, to fix on any thing which providence sees meet to withhold from you, so that ye must have it, and cannot be satisfied without it. Thus the Israelites lusted for flesh, and they got it with a vengeance, Numb. xi. Psal. Ixxviii. 30. 31. And it is ordinary that what people pull off the tree of providence before it be ripe for them, sets their teeth on edge, and proves a snare to them. There is nothing better than a weaned heart to fit one for the wilderness-way.

4. Looking back to Egypt, Numb. xiv. 4. There is a root of apostasy in every one's heart, though broken in the sincere, yet reigning in others: hence it comes to pass, that many go far back, and lose what they have attained in religion, making themselves new work, with difficulty to recover what they threw away: and many fall away for good and all, and never recover. We have much need to take heed to the first rising of these evil motions in the heart, Psal. xlv. 10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*

5. Fawning and flattering enemies, Numb. xxv. 17. 18. Pharaoh's pursuit with his chariots and horses, Amalek's sword and bow, did not the mischief to Israel in the wilderness, that the daughters of Moab did, Numb. xxv. Balaam tried all his art to curse them, but could do them no harm by all his enchantments: but the Midianitish women ruined them with theirs, ver. 9. The church of God has often weathered out the storm of persecution, and come off victorious; while she has been ruined with the soft methods of the enemy. And many have stood out against the frowning world, that have been cast down with the smiling world. They have been drawn to destruction with silken cords of temptation, who could not be driven to it with iron rods.

6. *Lastly,* The mixed multitude, Exod. xii. 38. They were a black sight to Israel in the wilderness,

a sad snare to them, Numb. xi. 4. They came in among them from a carnal principle of worldly interest, and were a snare to them, and their carcases fell in the wilderness. When God brings his church out of the house of bondage, and gives her peace, a company of carnal men driving their own worldly interest, join them like a swarm of insects in a summer-day, (Exod. xii. 38. *a great mixture*, Heb.); and the more their number increases, the more mischief they do to her true interests, sacrificing them to their own. It is not a little owing to the influence of that mixed multitude both of ministers and professors, that religion and its interests are at so low an ebb this day: and therefore we have ground to expect a stroke, come from what quarter it will, that will make a dispersion among us, and lessen our numbers, Ezek. xx. 37. 38. In the mean time beware of those who have a name to live, and are dead: formal professors often hurt a Christian more than the profane.

USE III. Of exhortation. And,

First, Ye who profess to be espoused to Christ, evidence the reality of it by your going up from the wilderness-world with him, in heart and affection, in the progress of sanctification, and contempt of the world, holding off from the ways of it. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Without this ye cannot evidence your sincerity, 1 John ii. 15. If your treasure be in heaven, your heart will be there. If Christ be indeed your espoused Husband, ye will forsake your father's house for him, and follow him. But many give him the hand, and not the heart; and therefore, though called by his name, dwell at their father's house still.

2. Without this ye will bring a reproach on religion, which suffers extremely by those who profess Christ, and yet follow the way of the world, Rom. ii. 24. Alas! for the wounds thus given to religion by the worldly disposition of the professors of it, whose untender

untender lives, and covetous practices, proclaim them sons of earth.

3. *Lastly*, Ye may be very useful for Christ in the world this way, by commanding religion practically at this rate, to the consciences of carnal men. *Who is this that goeth up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?* say the daughters of Jerusalem. What can have more influence upon them, than to see men dead to the world, heavenly in their disposition, walking as pilgrims on the earth? It is a noble testimony for God,

(i.) To the vanity of the world, while men in their practice tread on that which carnal men set their hearts upon. What avails it for a man to talk of the world's vanity, while he is still gripping it as his life, cannot part with it at God's call, for God's honour and service; but, on the contrary, is dishonouring God, and wounding his own soul, to gain it? That is building with the one hand, and destroying with the other.

(2.) To the reality and excellency of religion, and heavenly things, 1 Pet. iv. 4 Cant. iii. 6. It speaks a power in religion that can carry men above these perishing things, and that they must be fed from some other quarter, that so little value the streams of earthly things.

Secondly, Strangers to Christ, be espoused to him, that ye may go up with him from this wilderness-world, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan. Believe that Christ is offered in an everlasting marriage-covenant to you. Embrace ye and accept, and so close with him as your Head and Husband, for time and eternity. I offer the following motives to enforce this exhortation.

Mot. 1. Jesus Christ is really and truly in suit of your souls. This is the gospel-offer, Hos. ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving kindness, and in mercies;* and nothing

will hinder but the want of your consent, Matth. xxii. 4. *All things are ready : come unto the marriage.* He has with his precious blood bought a bride to himself, and he comes in the gospel to gain her heart to himself. And he is come to you this day ; O then slight not the offer.

2. If ye accept of Christ, he will carry you up from this wilderness-world to his Father's house, where the marriage will be solemnized for ever. He will leave none of his behind him. There may be a time betwixt the espousals and marriage ; but in that time he is carrying them to the marriage-chamber.

3. There is no loosing of the heart from the world without engaging it to Jesus Christ, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. It is the discovery of the one pearl that makes one give over seeking the many. The heart of man is like a child that will not let the knife go out of its hand, till something that pleases it better is put into it. Though the devil go out, if the house be empty, he will return again, Matth. xii. 44. 45.

4. *Lazily,* If ye are not espoused to Christ, ye will fall in the wilderness, and never see the heavenly Canaan, Heb. iv. 12. They will have no access to the marriage above, that are not espoused to Christ here below. Nor will they be transplanted into the paradise above, who are not first planted in the nursery of grace below.

Thirdly, I invite, and found an alarm to you all, to go up from this wilderness-world with Christ. Rise, ye that are espoused to him, and come away. Rise, ye dwellers in the wilderness. Take him as your Head and Husband, and go along with him towards the heavenly Canaan, leaving this world in heart and affection.

Quest. How shall I get up from the wilderness-world, how will I get through it to the heavenly Canaan, while the journey is so hard and difficult for a poor weak creature ? *Answ.* I give you your directions and advice in a third doctrine from the text.

Doct.

DOCT. *The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith.* The way to live well in this world, till we come to heaven, is to live by faith.

Here I shall briefly shew what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith; and that we are allowed to go thus.

I. I shall shew briefly what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith.

1. It supposes, the soul's taking, receiving, and embracing Christ for its Head and Husband, John i. 12. In the gospel Jesus Christ is offered, presented, and exhibited to every one that hears it, as the Father's gift to them, If. ix. 6. John iv. 10. He says in effect, " Poor souls, ye can never of yourselves make " your way up through the wilderness; but I freely, " give you a strong One to lean upon. Take him " and welcome." Hereupon the soul takes its hold of Christ for that end. The soul believes the gospel offer or promise as made to itself, saying in effect, " Then " he is mine by the free offer made to me;" which implies the heart's consent to take him, and so the espousals are made, 1 John v. 11. It bears a going,

2. Cleaving to him, A&ls xi. 23. Faith joins the soul to the Lord, so as to be one with him; and so holds the gripe, and will not quit it. The believer hangs by Christ, by the word of the gospel; and as the weak woman dares not lean to her own strength, but cleaves to her husband on the journey, so does the believer to Christ;

3. A going on under a sense of weakness, 2 Cor. iii 5. There are two causes of one's going leaning upon another. One is love, the other weakness: both concur here. The believer loves Christ as his Lord and Husband, and therefore *will* lean on him: he is sensible of utter weakness and inability to make the journey in his own strength, and therefore *must* lean on him. Faith is a self-emptying grace,,

and therefore is chosen to be the mean of communication on our part betwixt the Lord and us, Rom. iv. 16.

4. A going on, laying our weight on the Lord Jesus for the whole of the journey, Psal. lv. 22. When the believer sets out with Christ, he says to him, " All thy wants be on me." " So be it," says the believing soul, and so rolls itself upon him for all. Hence faith is called a *staying*, If l. 10. as an old man stays himself upon his staff: a *believing on Christ*, as a chief corner-stone, i. e. laying the weight on him, as on the foundation, 1 Pet. ii. 6.

5. *Lastly*, A going on, with a persuasion that we shall be borne up and borne through by him, 2 Tim. i. 12. This is the plain import of leaning on Christ; for none will ever lean on that for help, concerning which they have no manner of persuasion that they shall be helped by it. Thus faith is called *trusting in God*, *relying on him*, both which bear this persuasion. And they that would remove this from the nature of faith, would destroy it, and leave us a mere wavering opinion in its stead.

But as one may lean trembling, so faith may be accompanied with doubting. But as trembling belongs not to the nature of leaning, but is opposite to it; so doubting belongs not to the nature of faith, but is opposite to it. And the more trembling the less leaning, so the more doubting the less faith.

This going up from the wilderness leaning, is walking in Christ Jesus as we have received him, Col. ii. 6. which is the only true holiness competent to fallen man.

II. I shall shew, that we are allowed to go thus leaning. Consider, that,

1. The Father has appointed the Mediator for this very end, that so he may bring many sons to glory, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* The

The first man, with all his children in his loins, set off alone through the world, on his own stock; and fell, being unable to make the journey. Wherefore now the strength for all the heirs of glory is lodged in Christ, and they are allowed to live and lean on him, 1 Cor. i. 30. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* 2 Tim. ii, 1. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

2. We are called and commanded to lean on him, Psal. lv. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.* Prov. iii. 5. 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Psal. xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* II. xxvi. 3. 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* It is the great duty called for in the Old and New Testament. We honour the Father and the Son, by doing this through the Spirit.

3. To pretend to go another way, is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. iii. 5. We know no holiness of Adam's fallen children, but what is a walking in Jesus Christ. Men may call the obedience given to the law otherwise, holiness; but a holy God will never own it as such, when it favours not of union with his Son.

USE. Then if ye would go up from the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, go leaning on Jesus Christ.

1. Go leaning on him for light to know your duty, Prov. iii. 5. Ye are in the wilderness; let him be eyes to you there; look to him, as the Israelites did to the motions of the cloud, for your direction. He is the great

great Prophet and Teacher ; close your own eyes, that ye may be guided by his word and Spirit.

2. Go leaning on him for strength to perform your duty, Phil. iv. 13. It will not be your weak hands that will work the work, nor your feeble knees that will perform the journey. The strength must come from him who is the Head. And ye must go on on borrowed legs.

3. Lastly, Go leaning on him for acceptance, and the happy issue of your journey, Eph. i. 6. It is through him alone that any step we make in the Lord's way can be accepted, and by him alone we can be brought into the eternal rest.

In all this ye are to believe the word of promise, and on the credit of it to set about your duty, renouncing yourselves, and believing and applying the sufficiency treasured up in Christ.

Great is your need of leaning : ye have great work to do, a great journey to go, much weakness hangs about you, much opposition ye must encounter with; yet forward ye must be out of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan, else ye perish.

Enoch's

Enoch's Character and Translation explained; with a Description of walking with God, as that in which the Life of Religion lies.

Several sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1716.

GENESIS v. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him.

IT is too evident, that the generation we live in is in a declining condition; that professois are few, but real Christians fewer by far. Religion with many is turned to be the object of their ridicule; and among those that own it, to mere dry and sapless notions, for the most part. Few now are added to the church, or brought over out of the devil's camp. True godliness languishes, and serious experimental religion wears out. Therefore I would press religion in the life and power of it, on those that would save themselves from this untoward generation.

Here shines the brightest star in the patriarchal age, which having given light to the lower world for a time, was afterwards translated into a higher sphere, and passed out of the world in as unusual a manner as he lived in it. For as men live in the world, so ordinarily they go out of it.

There is a long account here, where nothing is marked but names and numbers, mens living and dying, till we come to Enoch, whose singular piety is recorded. *Observe,* The life of man is for the most part a vain thing, of which, by the sleeping of some, and the slumbering of others, nothing remains remarkable,

markable, but that they lived and died. But close walking with God serves another and better purpose, than to cause one just fill up room in the world for a while.

From the short history of these antediluvian patriarchs, we may learn one lesson, that will serve us all our days, *viz.* That we must die, how long foever we live. It is reported of one, that by hearing this chapter read in the church, he got such an impression of his own death, that he turned religious, that he might die well. *Drexel. de atern.*

But from the history of Enoch we may learn two lessons. 1. How to live well in this world. 2. The happiness that abides those in another world, who so live here; even eternal happiness of soul and body with the Lord.

In the words there is remarked a real preaching that was given to the old world by Enoch: a life-preaching; for his conversation preached to them, what religion was, and what was their great duty, *viz.* walking with God: a removal-preaching, (we cannot say his death preached, for he did not die; but his passage out of the world preached), that there is another and a better life with God in another world, both for soul and body. And this is no doubt marked, to shew us the mercy bestowed on that generation, that the godly in it might be encouraged, and the wicked left without excuse, while such a bright star shone so fair in that dark age. For it is observable, that his walking with God is twice told, once ver. 22. and here again in the text, in conjunction with his happy removal, giving us a compendious body of divinity, written for the use of that age especially, (not excluding others), in this man's life and translation out of the world. So that God left not himself without a witness in that degenerate age. They not only heard, but saw in him, the power of godliness, and the reward of it too.

Observe, Men will not only have the instructions
and

and warnings they get from the word, but those they get from the examples of holy men, to answer for in the day of accounts. There are silent preachers, who yet speak home, as *Noah*, who being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, Heb. xi. 7.; and the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the south, of whom our Lord says, Matth. xii. 41. 42. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* Examples of a holy life, if they do not lead spectators to heaven, will drive them more deep into destruction.

Though it is charitably thought, that all these patriarchs were good men, yet surely the age wherein Enoch lived was a very degenerate and profane age. Methuselah his son died the same year the deluge came on. He lived 969 years. Enoch walked with God 300 years. So from his translation there were but 669 to the deluge. Of that they got 120 years warning of the deluge; so that to that time there were but 549 years. There were none of those here mentioned but they lived more than 700 years. And God's Spirit had been long striving with the generation before the last 120 years. So that we may well reckon that many of those who lived in Enoch's days, were of those God's Spirit had so long striven with, and that were swept away by the deluge: and consequently that it was a very degenerate and profane age he lived in, wherein men had come the length to talk and act boldly against the God that made them, as appears from Jude 14. 15. *Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord*

Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Observe, Be the times never so bad, it is mens own fault they are bad too. Eminent holiness, and intimate communion with God, may be attained in the worst of times. While that generation was running to ruin, Enoch walked with God.

The reasons are,

1. Because however men grow worse and worse, Heaven is still as good and bountiful as ever, Is. lix.
 1. 2. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. God's door still stands open, though the generation conspire to trouble it very little for supply. Our Lord will never shut his door upon his people, because they are few; but it shall stand open as long as there is one that has business in his house, Micah ii. 7. *O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?*

2. Because those that mind for heaven, must row against the stream always; and if they do not, they will be carried down the stream in the best of times: for, says our Lord, Matth. xi. 12. *from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* If people will ply the throne of grace, and resolutely set themselves against the epidemical disease of their day, they may keep lively in the midst of a dead crew, though with much difficulty, as our Lord observes, Rev. iii. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.*

3. The badness of the times affords matter to excite

ite God's people the more to their duty, and close walking with God. The profaneness and formality of those they live among, and the dishonour done to God thereby, should be like oil to the flame of their holy love and zeal, as it was to David, Psal. cxix. 126. 127. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.* The prospect of what must needs be the issue of such apostasy of a generation may also quicken them; even as one is the more concerned to see to his own safety, that the rest of the family are pulling down the house about their own ears; as was the case with Noah, who, among a very wicked and abandoned people, had this character, *Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God,* Gen. vi. 9.

4. *Lastly,* Because as the Lord shews himself most concerned for the welfare of those, who are most concerned for his honour; so the worse the times are, they that cleave to him closely may expect to fare the better, as Noah also did, when the Lord said to him, *Come thou, and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,* Gen. vii. 1. Moses never had a more glorious manifestation of God, than at that time when the Israelites had fallen into the idolatry of the golden calf, and God was about to destroy the whole nation; as you will find by comparing Exod. xxxii. 10. and chap. xxxiii. & xxxiv.

Use. 1. Learn that those who keep not up communion with God, in the life and power of religion, in evil times, are in God's account joined and embarked with the generation of his wrath; and be who they will, they will smart with the rest for it, though they put not forth their hands to the notorious abominations of the times they live in. Hence is that threatening, Zeph. i. 12. *It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles,*

*and punish the men that are settled on their lees ; that
say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither
will he do evil.* It is a heavy word that sets formal
hypocrites and profane wretches on one and the same
bottom, Psal. cxxv. ult. *As for such as turn aside un-
to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth
with the workers of iniquity.*

2. Bad example with its influence will not excuse people before the Lord. While it is no comfort to go to hell with company, there can be no safety in following a multitude to do evil. What ! will men think that because the conspiracy against God and holiness is strong, therefore they may join in it ; that because serious godliness is going over the brae, therefore they may give it a push ? But wo will be to them that give an unhallowed touch to God's wain when it is at the halting.

3. To be complaining of the evil of the times, sighing and going backward in religion, is a fruitless unavailing complaint, neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to one's self. For at no time does religion consist in talking, but walking with God. And that is but to condemn ourselves out of our own mouths.

4. *Lastly,* Let us be exhorted to study the power and reality of religion in these dregs of time. Let us draw the nearer to God, that we see so many going far from him. And as we would not bring the wrath of God on ourselves, let us neither join with a profane generation, nor continue on our lees with a formal dead-hearted generation, strangers to the power of godliness. Consider here,

1. Enoch's holy life in this world.

2. His happy removal into a better world.

FIRST, Let us consider Enoch's holy life in this world ; *Enoch walked with God.* The Spirit of God puts a special remark on this. It is Enoch's honour, that he did not walk as others did, after their lusts. Yea, he walked more holily and closely with God, than other good men of that age.

Obser.

Observe. 1. God takes special notice of those who are best when others are worst, Gen. vi. 9. We see this in the instance of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom; likewise of those mentioned Ezek. ix. 4. concerning whom the Lord said, *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof;* and those taken notice of Mal. iii. 16 17. *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

1. To be thus argues an ingenuous spirit, a love to the Lord for himself, and a love to his way for its likeness to himself; that the soul is carried thus to it against the stream of the corruption of the age.

2. It argues not only grace, but the strength of grace. It must be strong faith, love, &c. that so much bear out against the strong temptation to apostasy, arising from the combination of a generation against God and his way. To be holy when the helps to a holy life are least in the world, argues the vigour of grace in the heart.

Use. Labour ye then to be best while others are worst, to confront the impiety of the generation wherein ye live. Do they indulge themselves in licentiousness? be ye the more strict and holy in your walk. Do they take up with mere externals in religion? strive ye the rather to get into the inner court, to taste and see, and there to have communion with God.

Observe. 2. It is the honour of a professor of religion, to outgo others in the matter of close walking with God. God himself is glorious in holiness. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. The liker he is to God, the more honourable is he.

Use. 1. This lets us see what would be a blessed emulation among professors, *viz* that we were striving who should be most tender, holy, and circumspect. O that that were brought in, in the room of all our strifes and contests about practices and opinions, which eat out the life of religion in our day! But alas! real holiness is little regarded, and therefore little striven for.

2. It must be a Godless-like mark in any person, to have the serpentine grudge rise in their breasts against others, as they see them eminent for holy and tender walking. These are the persons most beloved and honoured of God; and it looks devilish-like to hate them, and have one's heart rise against them, for that very reason for which God loves them.

In the first part of the words we have,

1. The person characterized; and that is *Enoch*. There was another of this name descended from Cain, who had a city called after his name, Gen. iv. 17. Immortality is desired of all; and because men cannot slave off death, they follow after a shadow of immortality, that at least their name may live when they are gone. Therefore that has been an ancient custom, for men to call their lands after their own names, Psal. xlix. 11. How much better was it with this *Enoch*, that took that course to get on him the name of the city of God, which Christ promises to write on all his people, Rev. iii. 12. ? The city called by the name of the other *Enoch* was destroyed by the deluge, and is now unknown; but the city of God lasts still, and will last for ever.

Obf. True piety is the best way to honour, even to true honour. For the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance, when the memory of the wicked shall rot.

Enoch signifies dedicated, initiated, instructed. His life answered his name, for he lived as one devoted to the Lord. *Obf.* It is the duty of those devoted to God by their godly parents, to devote themselves to the Lord. And where grace comes in with good education,

education, it ordinarily makes men famous in their generation, and signally serviceable to God.

He was the seventh from Adam, and a prophet, who foretold the last judgement, even in that early age of the church, Jude 14. above cited. He was like Noah, a preacher of righteousness in his day; and like John Baptist, a burning and shining light, burning in his conversation, shining in his doctrine.

Obs. They that live near God, are most likely to be put upon his secrets, and to know most of his mind: Psal. xxv. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

2. His character: He *walked with God*. He lived like a man of another world; a life of close communion with God. It imports, (1.) That he was really religious; not only religious before men, but before God. *Obs.* Religion lies inwardly. We are that really which we are before the Lord, Rom. ii. ult. *He is a Jew, which is one inwardly.* (2.) He was eminently religious. *Obs.* Men may attain to eminency in religion, in very bad times, by setting the Lord always before them. See here,

i/, What he was; a spiritual traveller through the world: He *walked*. Whereas it is said of others, They *lived*; it is said of Enoch, He *walked with God*. He looked on himself as a pilgrim and stranger in this present world, Heb. xi. 13. compare ver. 5. and did not sit down in it to take up his abode on this side Jordan.

Obs. They that would live a life of communion with God, must live as pilgrims in this world, as travellers through it to a better country.

1. Their hearts must be loosed from the world, bidding an eternal farewell to it as a portion, 1 John ii. 15. The heart gone from God naturally sits down on the creature, to suck the sap of it, and to pursue it as its chief good. Now, the first step to the soul's thriving, is to lift the heart from the creature, and once fairly to give up with the vain world.

2. They must be fixed on the better country, Heb. xi. 14. They must look to the land that is afar off, resolutely aiming to be there, and therefore habitually keeping it in their eye, as the mark they desire to hit, Phil. iii. 20. Thus we shall be heavenly in the frame and disposition of our spirits.

3. They must keep death much in their view, the passage out of this world into the other, Job xiv. 14. *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.* See what a familiarity he had contracted with it, chap. xvii. 14. *I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.* This is the way to wean our hearts from the world, and to stir us up to converse much with another world.

4. *Lastly,* They must beware of dipping deep in things of this life, but go through the world lightly, like travellers, who serve themselves with a passing view of those parts they go through: 1 Cor vii. 29. 30. 31. *But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

The reason is, because the world is one of the great make-bates betwixt God and a foul. And so far as it gets in betwixt God and us, it causes an eclipse of the light of the Lord's countenance.

Use. As ever ye would live a life of communion with God, live as pilgrims in this world. The manna never fell from heaven in the wilderness, till the provision brought from Egypt was spent and done. Deny yourselves to this world, if ye would have the taste of things of a better world. When the vessels of your hearts are emptied of the love of the world, the oil of grace will run.

2dly, The company he kept while he was in the way:

way: He *walked with God*. He did not walk with the generation he lived in; did not go with the multitude, thinking it enough to do as they did: but he *walked with God*, being a follower of the Lord, keeping his eye on him.

Obs. True religion makes one give up with the way of the world, and set God before them for all. It is the way of strangers from God to follow the course of this world, Eph. ii. 2. They that mind for heaven, must be nonconformists to the world, Rom. xiii. 2. They must be practical separatists from the world, in life and conversation, Psal. xii. 7. as it was with Joshua, who said, chap. xxiv. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Use. 1. See here what a graceless-like thing it is for people to content themselves to be like neighbour and other. Ah, Sirs, though all the world should approve you, if God condemn you, what will it avail? They that pin their faith or holiness on other people's sleeve, have neither faith nor holiness, and will never see heaven.

2. See the necessity of a religion beyond the reach of the common gang of the world, Zech. iii. 8. Ye must not satisfy yourselves with the religion that most part do; but press forward to leave them behind you, because they do not walk with God.

3dly, His constancy in the way of the Lord: He *walked incessantly*, as the word signifies. He did not take his religion by fits and starts, as many do, but he kept a constant course of it. Ver. 22. tells us, he walked with God three hundred years, all the time he lived after he begat Methuselah. Though perhaps he was a good man while he lived single in his young days; yet his last days were his best days. His greatest eminency for piety was in the days of his married life; while his family was increasing, his soul was increasing too.

Obs. A married state is a state of life very consistent with the soul's flourishing in religion.

Use. How

Use. How unreasonable then is that excuse, which goes mighty far with the world, Luke xiv. 20. *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come?* It was not so with Enoch; the comforts of it did not so bewitch him, nor the cares of it so rack his spirit, but that he was one of the holiest and heavenliest men that ever lived. What a pity is it, that that state should be a state of declining in religion to so many, and that as their family increases, their soul's case goes to wreck? So that of their marriage-day it may be said, as John vi. 66. *From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* It is a holy state, and a helpful one, by God's appointment. It must needs be a dreadful busines, where the one proves a snare to the other, for apostasy from the life of God.

SECONDLY, There is Enoch's happy removal into a better world.

1. Consider his leaving of this world: *He was not, no more in this world.* Of all the rest it is said, they *died*; but of him only, *he was not*, for he died not, but got out of the world without dying. He was taken off,

1st, Soon, being only 365 years of age. That was in the midst of his days; for there were none of the patriarchs before the flood, but they lived more than as long again.

Obs. God oft-times takes them soonest out of the world that are dearest to him. Why then should we be fond of long life? He was a man that was dear to God, and useful for God. And if he did not live long, he lived fast, and did more in his few days, than others in double the time. He had no loss, for the remainder of his days he got in heaven.

2dly, Suddenly; so the phrase seems to import, Psal. xxxvii. 36. and so the nature of the thing requires it to be; as in the case of Elijah, 2 Kings ii. 11. and those who shall be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51. 52. cases parallel to this. He evanished.

Obs. A

Obs. A sudden removal out of the world may befall the best of God's children. Why should the Lord's people then be afraid of sudden death? It does but make sore work short work; and they that are in Christ can never be taken habitually at least unprepared; and they that always walk habitually with God, are always actually prepared. Good old Eli died such a death.

2. Consider his transportation to heaven: *God took him*; took him home, took him up soul and body at once to himself into heaven, Heb. xi. 5. God made a change on his corruptible body without death, even such a change as will be made on the bodies of the saints that shall be alive at Christ's second coming. So there was as great a difference betwixt his removal and that of others, as betwixt his life and theirs.

Obs. When the saints leave the world, God takes them home to himself.

All the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were alive at Enoch's translation, except Adam, who died some time before, and Noah, who was born some time after. Adam himself had heard the voice of God, and Noah got an eminent confirmation of his faith in his preservation in the ark. Enoch's translation might be confirming to the rest, in the faith of a future happy state of the saints, both in soul and body. And it was a sure pledge of the resurrection, that was then very far off, and not yet come.

Obs. The weight of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which God so early confirmed. It is worthy to be remarked, how Enoch's body was carried to heaven before the law, Elijah's under the law, and Christ's under the gospel. So that each of the three great periods of the world's age, had in it a notable pledge of the resurrection of the body.

Use. Let us then live and die in the faith of it; and while we live, live as those that look for it.

Having

Having thus given a large practical explication of the text, I proceed to observe a point of doctrine from them, as the ground of some further discourse.

Doct. *The life of religion lies in walking with God; or, The great thing we shoud aim at for practical godliness, is to walk with God.*

Here I shall,

- I. Explain this walking with God.
- II. Confirm the doctrine, That the life of religion lies in walking with God.
- III. Lastly, Apply.

I. For explication of this walking with God, I shall consider it,

1. In the foundation thereof, with respect to our state.
2. In the matter of it, in respect of our frame and conversation.
3. In the properties thereof.

FIRST, I am to consider walking with God in the foundation thereof, with respect to our state. And so it presupposes,

First, Spiritual life restored to the soul in regeneration. Men are naturally dead to God and holiness, Eph. ii. 1. *dead in trespasses and sins.* A dead man cannot walk, and a dead soul cannot walk with God. Before Lazarus once in the grave could move again, he behoved to be quickened and raised again. No wonder that many cannot walk with God, seeing they are strangers to the life of God. They live as they were born in a natural state. Consider,

1. The eye of the understanding is out, and man naturally is blind, Eph. v. 8. Walking with God is a regular walk; how then can the blind soul walk so? To walk at random is to walk contrary to God, Lev. xxvi. 21. *Heb.* Never a soul will stumble on the way of God; for while in the state of blindness, Satan and

and lusts lead the soul. Therefore we must be cured by divine illumination ; and for this cause the gospel is preached, A&ts xxvi. 18. *to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light*

2. The feet of the soul, the will and affections, are quite indisposed for walking with God, and they must be cured. Hence is the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.*

(1.) They are distorted, disjointed, and cannot ply to the way of God : Jer. xiii. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* They have got a set to backsliding from the Lord, and they cannot be cured without a miracle of grace. That must give them a new set, or we are undone for ever, Psal. lxxxv. ult. *Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

(2.) They are weak, and unable to bear us in his way, Rom. v. 6. We lost our strength in the loins of our first parents, and never recover it till we be in Christ, to partake of his Spirit. If the soul aim to rise, it cannot; if to walk, the legs fail under us. Nay,

(3.) They are powerless, John xv. 5. & vi 44. There is power in them to carry us still further out of God's way, but they are absolutely unable to move heavenward, till they be endowed with power from on high. Therefore we are to be concerned for the new nature, the principle of spiritual life.

Secondly, Faith in God through Jesus Christ. We must come to God before we can walk with him, and it is by faith we come to him, Heb. xi. 6. We are naturally at a distance from God: in the everlasting covenant God offers to meet us in Christ. So by coming to Christ we meet with God, that we

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may set off in our way with him. Whoso would walk with God,

1. Must take God for their God in the covenant, Heb. viii. 10. renouncing all others for him, and accepting him as their God and portion, to walk with him as their covenanted God. The world bears great bulk in sinners eyes naturally, but we must look over it and above it, to the God that made it, that we may take up our souls everlasting rest in him. So did Enoch, while the rest were following vanities; he closed his eyes on them, and came to God as his soul's home.

2. They must embrace Christ in the offer of the gospel, seeing in him only we can meet with God. God out of Christ is a consuming fire; but veiled with the flesh of Christ, he is a refreshing sun. We cannot walk with an absolute God, more than dry jewel can lie before a consuming fire.

Thirdly, A state of reconciliation with God, Amos iii. 3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Man naturally is in a state of enmity with God. And while that lasts, he can never walk with God dutifully to him, nor comfortably to himself. For in that state what we do can never be acceptable to God, nor can we look for comfort to ourselves by it: and hence Eliphaz advises, Job xxii. 21. *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.* Therefore we must be in a justified state, having our sins pardoned for the sake of Christ, and so in a state of peace through the great Peacemaker. When God and a sinner in a state of enmity meet, what can be expected but,

1. Angry looks? No wonder he turn his back on such; so that though they come to Jerusalem, they see not the King's face: Hos. v. 6. *They shall go to seek the Lord: but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them.*

2. Angry words? God can speak so as to make the conscience hear, where there is no audible voice,

Psal.

Psal. 1. 16. *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?* That is a question that imports anger, upbraiding, accusing, and grief for the contempt put upon him. And O what a sad matter is it to have him angry with us in whose favour life lies; him to upbraid us, who does us all the good we get; him our accuser, who is our only intercessor; and him to be grieved with us, who only can make us glad?

3. Angry strokes? When enemies meet, no wonder there be blows a-dealing. Sometimes there are strokes on the body, 1 Cor. x. 1.—6. strokes on the soul, Mal. i. ult. See how it was with the Israelites in the wilderness, Psal. cvi. 15. *He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.* Wherefore let us labour to have God for our friend in Christ, that we may walk with him.

Fourthly, Conversion, or turning to God. We are naturally turned away from God, and therefore are called to return to him, Hos. xiv. 1. Our hearts are turned away from himself; our feet are turned away from his way. We must turn back again ere we can walk with him.

1. Our hearts must be brought off the world to God, Cant. iv. 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards.* The first removing of the heart was from God to the creature, from the fountain to the muddy streams and broken cisterns, Jer. ii. 13. There men naturally seek their happiness, comfort, and satisfaction. But it must remove again, leave the bulky vanity, the fair deceitful nothing, and return to God. Our hearts must be lifted, our love, joy, delight, &c. off the creature, and set on God.

2. Our hearts must be brought from our lusts to the Lord, from our sins to our Saviour: we must say,

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That which I see not, teach thou me : if I have done iniquity, I will do no more, Job xxxiv. 32. That day the soul returns to the Lord, the idols will be cast to the bats and to the moles, Is. ii. 20. For if God get the throne in the heart, they will get the cross. It was in this case God observed Ephraim, and was well pleased with him, Jer. xxxi. 18. 19. 20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented : and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child ? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : therefore my bowels are troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

3. We must be brought out of ourselves unto God, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.* Man turning off from God turned into himself, and made himself his chief end, acting from himself and to himself. So we are naturally hemmed in within the cursed circle of self, out of which we must be turned ere we can walk with God. And,

(1.) Out of our self-wisdom, put in the room of Christ as a Prophet. For thus saith God to all that would walk with him, *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go ; I will guide thee with mine eye,* Psal. xxxii. 8. Whoso would give up themselves to the Lord, must as it were put out their own eyes, resolving never more to guide themselves, that they may follow the Lord, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. who, at God's call, *went out, not knowing whither he went.*

(2.) Out of our self-righteousness, put in the room of Christ as a Priest. We must come up to duties, and

and then come over them, renouncing all confidence in them, laying no weight on them in the point of commanding us to the favour of God. For what stress is laid on them that way, derogates from the honour of him on whom the Father has laid help, and is inconsistent with the character of the true circumcision, Phil. iii. 3. Otherwise we cannot walk with God in duties.

(3.) Out of our self-will and self-ability, put in the room of Christ as a King. Man is naturally wilful, and will have his own liking, and do what seems good in his own eyes. But in the day that one comes to walk with God, he gives up with his own will, saying, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* He gives it to be led as a captive after Christ's chariot-wheels, so that he may draw it and drive over it, as seems good in his eyes, 2 Cor. x. 5.

Man also naturally goes into himself for strength wherewith to do commanded duty, being ignorant of Christ as the head of influences for sanctification. But in the day one comes to walk with God, he renounces his own stock as insufficient, and gives up himself to live by Christ, in the way of being daily supplied, John vi. 57. For then he sees the truth of that saying, *He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool : but who so walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.* Prov. xxviii. 26.

SECONDLY, I shall consider walking with God in the matter of it, in respect of our frame and conversation. And indeed this duty goes as broad as the whole law. I must take it up in some particulars. If we would have the life of religion in our walk, we must not walk at random.

FIRST; We must walk with God in the way of habitual eying of him in all things. It is the neck-break of many, that God is not in all their thoughts, and the ruin of religion among professors, that they forget God, though he is not far from any of us. The heart is like a common inn, so thronged with stran-

gers, that the master is not noticed, but thrust out to make room for others. It was otherwise with David, Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

1. We must eye him as our witness in all things. Let us say every where as Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13. *Thou God seest me.* Let us fix on our hearts awful apprehensions of his omniscience and omnipresence, as Psal. cxxxix. 7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* There is a root of Atheism in our hearts that says, *The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not*, Ezek. ix. 9. And O how ready are the best to forget, though they are ever under the chalk of his eye, that he is a witness to every thought, word, and action! Thus walking with God implies,

(1.) The believing of his all-seeing eye, embracing it with a firm faith, that he is intimately acquainted with all our ways, Heb. iv. 13. His eye is on us where no other eye can see us, yea where our own eyes cannot reach, that is, into our hearts. And where the true faith of this is, it will not want an impression of proportionable depth with the strength of the faith wherewith it is apprehended.

(2.) An habitual minding of this all-seeing eye that is on us, Psal. xvi. 8. Walkers with God are frequently listing themselves in the presence of this God; and especially when the temptation comes, they look to him that sees them, and say, *Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

(3.) A suitable respect to this all-seeing eye, influencing our hearts, lips, and lives, to beware of sin, and to be diligent and upright in duty. The eyes of a child will restrain people sometimes; how much more should the eye of God, that is never off us?

2. Eye him as our Judge, to whom at length we must give an account, Rom. xiv. 10. Let us remember, and often have in our mind, that word which at length will reach our ears, *Rise ye dead, and come*

to judgement. We might walk as we list, if we were never to be called to account. But there is not a thought, word, or action, but what must be judged, Rom. ii. 16. Eccl. xii. ult. We can never say there is more than a step betwixt us and the judgement-seat, and therefore there is good reason we should walk as prisoners going to the bar.

(1.) Let us walk as under the eye of an infinitely-holy Judge, who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence, Hab. i. 13. He can never be brought by any means to approve of sin, how little soever we think of it. The least spot is offensive to the eyes of his jealousy, and he cannot away with it.

(2.) Let us walk as under the eye of an accurate Judge, from whom no crime can be hid, whose eyes no pretences nor fair colours can deceive. Let us remember when we come there, our crimes cannot be hid for want of evidence; for the omniscient Judge himself is witness to all, and that omniscience will pierce through all the vails wherewith we now cloke our sins.

(3.) Let us walk as under the eye of an impartial Judge. He is one that cannot be biased either by feud or favour. He is no respecter of persons, but rewards every one according to his work. The belief of this would make us impartial in our own cause; and if we were walking with God, we would list our own cause without partiality.

3. Eye him as our Redeemer and Saviour, Is. xlvi. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* To eye God as our witness and judge, without eying him as a God in Christ, atoned by his blood, wouldest fright us away from him, so as we could never walk with him more. But that a guilty creature may walk with God, let him,

(1.) Eye the mercy of God in a Mediator, Is. Iv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the*

Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. That is a large covering under which may be hid all the guilt of our walk. It reaches deep and extends very far, Psal. lxxxvi. 13. *Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.* In our most accurate walking, and when we have done our utmost, there will be need of grace and mercy. And we must believably apply to it, that when we have fallen, we may rise up again and walk.

(2.) Eye the righteousness of a Redeemer. Had the most close walker with God nothing to look to but the righteousness of his own works, he would never have ground of joy all the way through the wilderness. But the naughtiness of his own righteousness makes him look often to the imputed righteousness, and there he joys, Is. xlvi. 24. 25. *Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

(3.) Eye the conscience-purging blood, Heb xii. 22. 24. If thou hast come up into Christ's chariot of the covenant, the covering of it is a covert of purple, that is ever over thy head. When conscience is wounded with guilt, it is like a thorn got into the foot of the traveller, who can walk no more till it be drawn out, Heb. ix. 14.

4. Eye him as the fountain of strength, Is. xlvi. 24. forecited. This was the way that David resolved to walk with God, Psal. lxxi. 16 *I will go in the strength of the Lord God.* The way we have to go is difficult, we have little strength, and there is much opposition; we need to keep our eye on him in whom the believer's strength lies, Psal. lxxxiv. 5. None walk with God but those that draw strength from him, for the whole of their walk. And that lies in two things.

(1.) Believing the promise of strength and furniture, for whatever piece of the way we are called to go through, Psal. cxvi. 9. 10. *I will walk before the Lord*

Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken. The spiritual traveller has many a difficult step in his way to Immanuel's land, but in the covenant there is strength promised to carry him through them all. He must keep his eye on the promise, and firmly believe it, for that is the way to suck the breasts of these consolations.

(2.) Using the means on the credit of the promise. God's institutions have promises annexed to them, and they become effectual, being thus believably used, Heb. iv. 2. compare John xvii. 17. To pretend to believe without using of means, is presumption; to use the means without believing the promise, is lifeless formality. Is there a lust to mortify, or a temptation to resist? let us use the means, and believe the promise of sanctification with close application to ourselves.

5. Eye him as our Master, Lord, Head, and Husband, Psal. xlv. 11. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.* See how the spouse comes out of the wilderness walking with God, even leaning on him as her Head and Husband, Cant. viii. 5. We must walk with him, as obedient servants with a master, dutiful subjects with a king, &c. Whomsoever others serve, let it be our resolution to serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 15. And this imports, that we must be ready,

(1.) To receive his orders, and the least indications of his mind to comply with them, signified to us by his word or providence. How closely did the psalmist thus walk with God? Psal. cxxiii. 2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.* And this is the duty of all pretending to be espoused to Christ. So that it must needs be great untenderness, that *God speaks once, yea twice, yet men regard it not.*

(2.) To do his bidding; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* said Paul, Acts ix. 6. Our Lord lets

lets us see, that it is not talking of, but thus walking with God, that is religion indeed, Luke vi. 46. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* And it is not the hearers, but the doers of the word that shall be justified. There is no walking with God, if we walk not in the road of obedience to his commands. If we take our own way, we walk not with him, but Satan.

(3.) To be careful to please him in all things, 1 Cor. vii. 34. to give content to the heart of Christ in whatever we do, Col. i. 10. not only to do the thing he commands, but to do it to his mind, so as he may take pleasure in us, and delight to do us good. For thus the duty of Christ's spouse in walking with God is summed up, Psal. xlvi. 10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*

6. Lastly, Eye him as our chief end. As he that walks with God sets off in his way in him and by him, so he walks to him as the great end of his walk, Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me.* Rom. xi. ult. *For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* This implies two things.

(1.) Aiming at his glory in all things, 1 Cor. x. 31. We must make that the great scope of all our actions, and of our whole life. He that walks with God displaces self, which is the dead sea into which all our actions naturally run, and sets up the honour of God instead thereof; reckoning his life no more useful in the world than it tends to the honour of God. For we are as trees in a vineyard, of no use, but as they bring forth fruit to the master's use, Luke xiii. 7.

(2.) Seeking to enjoy him as our chief happiness, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Man can never be self-sufficient, (no not angels); that is the peculiar prerogative of God, whose perfections are infinite. So he must needs seek his happiness without himself. While he is without God in a natural state, he seeks it in the creatures;

creatures; when he comes to God, he takes God for it. And walking with God, he habitually seeks it in the enjoyment of him, and feeds at that table he sits down to in conversion. And so if ye would walk with God,

1.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in all things, in the measure he is to be enjoyed here, Psal. xxvii. 4.; seek to enjoy him in ordinances, Psal. lxxiii. 1. 2. public, private, and secret. Ye must not stay in the shell, nor in the outer court; but seek to believe, taste, and feel, Psal. xxxiv. 8. Ye must seek him in providences, Psal. xciv. 4. merciful and favourable, smiling and frowning. He will be the sap and fountain of mercies to the walker with God, Gen. xxxiii. 10. and they will see his name in cross dispensations, Micah vi. 9.

2.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in heaven hereafter. If ye walk through the world with God, ye will walk as pilgrims bound for another and better country, keeping that in your view as your only rest, Heb. xi. 13. 16. He that walks with God, walks as one living, that he may die well, making it the business of this life to learn to die, and to get beyond it to a better life.

SECONDLY, We must walk with God in the way of the heart's going along with him in all things, as the shadow goes with the body. Hence it is called *walking after the Lord*, Hos. xi. 10. *following the Lord*, Numb. xiv. 24. Walking with God is no bodily motion, but a spiritual motion, a moving of the heart and affections; and so it must import necessarily the heart's going along with him. I will take it up in these three things. If ye would walk with God, your hearts must go along with him,

1. In the way of believing in all things. Thus Enoch walked with God, Heb. xi. 5. God is a Spirit, and our souls are spirits. The way of communion betwixt God and us is in the way of believing; for we cannot know him to our salvation, but as he has revealed himself to us in his word. So God manifesting

manifesting himself by his word, we cannot walk with him, but as our hearts go along with these manifestations of himself, in the way of believing; hence is that account the apostle gives us of his walk, Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* So walking with God imports,

(1.) Believing of his commands. Faith discerns the stamp of divine authority on the commands, and so gives them a suitable weight on one's own spirit. It esteems and judges them all right and reasonable, Psal. cxix. 128. So they are believed to be not only from God, but suited to the divine perfections, and to man's real welfare. Which cannot miss to influence the person to obedience.

(2.) Believing of his promises, the promises of the gospel, Heb. xi. 13. He that walks with God, does not only believe the great leading promises of the covenant, of God himself's being their God, and of eternal salvation, but the lesser promises depending on these. And while others take other things for their heritage, they take the promises for theirs, Psal. cxix. 111. So the great thing that sways them in their course of life, is the prospect of unseen things, (2 Cor. iv. 18.) to be had in another world, and likewise the prospect of what is promised even in this life.

So the promises are apt to influence obedience; and when they do, that is walking with God; when one ventures on, and follows the way of duty on the credit of the promise: e. g. giving out of their substance at God's call, upon the faith of the promise, Prov. iii. 9. 10. &c.

(3.) Believing of his threatenings, Heb. xi. 7. We find holy men have thus walked with God, being influenced to a tender holy walk by the faith of God's threatenings in his word, Job xxxii. ult. David was not of a servile legal spirit, when he says, Psal. cxix. 120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.* Hence they that walk with

with God, will not venture on an ill thing, more than they would take fire into their bosom, because the terror of God makes them afraid of sin.

2. In the way of compliance with his holy will. If we do not thus in all things, we walk contrary to him. When man fell off from God, his own will became his law, and was set in opposition to the will of God. When he returns to God, his will is inclined by grace to God's will; and walking with God it goes along therewith, complying with it in all things. So walking with God imports,

(1.) Complying with the will of his command in all things, *A&ts ix. 6.* The heart of the believer is reconciled to, and approves of the law as holy, just, and good; and while he walks with God, he labours sincerely to suit his walk thereunto in all things, being grieved at any reluctance that is in his heart against any piece of obedience, crying with David, *Psal. cxix. 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

(2.) Complying with the will of his providence, the heart being reconciled to that lot which God is pleased to carve out, *Psal. xlvii. 4.* O what walking contrary to God is there in this respect, while the proud unhumbled heart will not, cannot accommodate itself to divine dispensations! but murmurs, frets, and repines, and rebels against the Lord, as the sovereign Governor of the world.

3. In the way of habitual moving of the heart towards him. Grace has an attractive virtue in the heart drawing it towards God. And when it is in exercise, it will make the heart to be moving towards him, whereas otherwise it settles on other things besides him. So in walking with God there is,

(1.) Frequent thinking and meditating on him, *Mal. iii. 16.* That is a black character of the wicked, *Psal. x. 4. God is not in all his thoughts.* And the saint is in a backgoing condition that begins to forget him, *Jer. ii. 32.* Yea, fleeting thoughts are
not

not sufficient; if we walk with God, he will be the subject of our meditation, both occasional and stated, Psal. lxiii. 6. If we walk with a man, he is ever in our view, and so we cannot miss to think on him.

(2.) Habitual moving of the heart towards him, in love, desire, trust, &c. He is the chief good and the best of beings, which should ever command our love, Deut. vi. 5. That is the holy fire that is kept glowing and flaming in the heart of one that walks with God; loving him for himself, and for his goodness to us. Desires after him are the breathings of a soul touched with the love of God, tending to perfect enjoyment. And the continual wants and weakness that such a one finds himself compassed with, turn him very naturally to trust and dependence on him.

(3.) Frequent use of ejaculatory prayer, 1 Thess. v. 17. This is that kind of prayer to which we have access at all times, the darting up of a desire to the Lord, whatever be the lawful business we are about, or whatever be our case. And hardly can people be thought to walk with God, that are not frequently sending these swift, though silent messengers to heaven. We find Jacob, in the midst of his testament, using such a devout ejaculation, Gen. xlix. 18. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* See Moses's practice, Exod. xiv. 15. and Nehemiah's, before he answered a king, Neh. ii. 4.

THIRDLY, We must walk with God in ordinances, Luke i. 6. submitting to, and seeking communion with God in all ordinances as we have access. The ordinances are the banqueting-house of Christ, wherein he feasts his people, Cant. ii. 4. the galleries wherein the King is held by those that walk with him there, Cant. vii. 5. Particularly communion with God is to be sought and kept up,

1. In secret prayer, Matth. vi. 6. We must walk with God in a due and ordinary observance of that kind of prayer. It is a duty wherein the people of God

God have had as much communion with God as in any other; witness Jacob's experience, Gen. xxxii. 24, and Daniel's, chap. ix. 22. The Lord promises his people a particular familiarity with him in that duty, Cant. vii. 11. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: let us lodge in the villages.* And however some may be blithe to get it shifted, yet the truly-exercised would find it hard, nay they could not at all live without it. And how people can walk with God, taking it only now and then, and not making conscience of ordinary observing of it, I see not. And indeed people will readily know by their disposition in secret prayer, whether they be in a thriving case or not.

2. In family-prayer, Acts x. 2. 3. Never one that gives Christ heart-room, but they will be willing to give him house-room too. And there are none that walk with God themselves, but they would fain all their family walked with God too, Josh. xxiv. 15. And there are none who have gone about it seriously, but must say, that family-worship is an ordinance in which God is to be found. Prayerless families are in a dangerous condition; they are as if the owners should uncover the roofs of them, that wrath may be showered down on them, Jer. x. ult. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.* And I think if people were walking with God in family-duties, they would not lay by the morning-exercise, as many of you do. And what is it that hinders it? What but the weary world? ye cannot get time for it, because of your business. But are not ye afraid of God's curse on that business that shuts out his worship? And if it should thrive, ye take the way to get leanness to your souls. It looks not like walking with God to stand off from family-worship, till they have no other thing ado, and it is a graceless-like thing to offer only that time to God that costs you nothing.

3. In reading of the word, John v. 39. We find
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the truly-godly have been great lovers of the Bible. O how does David commend it, especially in the 119th psalm, though it was but a small part of it that was written in his time! One that would walk with God, should even walk through the Bible, reading it, and acquainting themselves with the mind of God in it. And ye will see, that whenever persons come to be in earnest exercised about their case, they will very naturally go to their Bibles in quite another manner than they used to do.

4. In extraordinary prayer, setting time apart for it, either in secret, or in families; of which I have spoke before *.

5. In hearing of the word. Whenever the Lord puts an occasion of hearing the word in your hand, he says in effect, Come walk with me in the galleries; and *with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*, Is. xii. 3. And every believing soul will reply with David, Psal. lxxv. 4. *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* The Sabbath-day is a day of blessing, the preaching of the gospel is the great means for the salvation of sinners, 1 Cor. i. 21. Is it not then a slighting of communion with God, for people to idle away so many Sabbaths at home, in making so little conscience of attending on public ordinances? Read through the whole Bible, and ye will not find a gracious person, but was much addicted to the place where his honour dwells, to public ordinances. And I assure you, the godly in some places would wonder if they could have any good in them at all, that can contentedly sit at home, when they are neither sick nor sore, nor have any providential necessity put upon them. It is very observable, Numb. ix. 10.—13. “that if any man of Israel, or of their posterity should

* See Memorial concerning personal and family fasting, annexed to the author's View of the covenant of grace.

be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he should keep the passover unto the Lord:—but the man that was clean, and was not in a journey, and forbore to keep the passover; even the same soul should be cut off from his people, because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season.” Whence observe, that as those who against their wills are forced to be absent from God’s ordinances, may expect the favours of his grace under their affliction; so those who of choice absent themselves, may expect the tokens of his wrath for their sin.

6. *Lastly*, In the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. That is an ordinance especially appointed for communion with God, 1 Cor. x. 16. And it has been so in the experience of many souls. Wherefore it must be strange how those can walk with God, that never set their foot on that holy ground, though they have one opportunity after another.

And if ye would walk with God in these duties, (1.) Ye must make conscience of preparation, even prepare for secret prayer, &c. (2.) Seek and press forward for communion with God in these ordinances, and take not up with the external work. (3.) Do not take them by starts, but keep an ordinary, as ye have occasion, otherwise ye cannot be said to walk with God in them.

FOURTHLY, We must walk with God in providences. These are his ways wherein he walks towards us, and we must walk with him in them, Hos. xiv. ult. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.* Sometimes he goes with us in the way of smiling, sometimes of crofs providences: but whether he take the high road of lifting up, or the low one of downcasting, we are to follow, and walk with him. This lies in these seven things.

1. We must notice his hand in all that we meet

with from any hand whatsoever. God guides the world by wisdom, and without him second causes cannot move, Ezek. i. 20. Whether thou meet with a mercy or a cross, say in thine heart, This is the finger of God, Gen. xxxiii. 10. The not noticing of this is a spice of Atheism, that God is highly displeased with, Psal. xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* See how the Pagan Chaldeans do with smiling providences, Hab. i. 16. *They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.* And see what the Philistines say of their afflictions, *It is a chance.* But he that walketh with God, takes all out of the Lord's hand.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the aspect of providence, whether it be shining or louring, Eccl. vii. 14. For without this we shew a contempt of providence, which the Lord takes hainously, as you may see by looking to If. xxii. 12. 13. 14. We must rejoice in his mercies, and walk soberly and concernedly under the strokes of his hand.

3. We must labour to find out the design of providence. Providence has a voice, and it is a voice of speech which may be understood, Ezek. i. 24. The works of providence are a book which the walker with God labours to read the mind of God in. Merciful dispensations are preachers of repentance, and happy are they that hear their voice, Rom. ii. 4. Cross dispensations have a language to the same purpose, Micah vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: bear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

To help you to know the particular design of providence in cross dispensations that ye meet with,

(1.) Pray in faith for it, believing that God will discover it to you in the use of means, in his own time, Job x. 2. *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Compare Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatsoever*

soever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. But take good heed that your souls be truly and honestly laid open to divine instruction, that you be disposed to know it at any rate, though it should touch you in a most sensible part: Psal. xxv. 9. *The meek will be guide in judgement: and the meek will be teach his way.*

(2.) Search for it, as the Israelites did for the accursed thing, Psal. lxxvii. 6. Think upon it, in order to find it out. Take a view of your way, what it was before and at the time when ye met with the cross; even as when men have lost any thing, they go back till they come to the place where they are sure they had it.

(3.) Take help of the word in this matter. Consider scripture threatenings, or examples, that may be apposite to your case. All that you or I meet with is but a fulfilling of the scripture, Hos. vii. 12. And as providence gives light to the word, so the word gives light to providence. And thus Moses opened up the meaning of a dark providence to Aaron from the word, Lev. x. 3. *This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.* And Aaron held his peace.

(4.) Listen to the whispers of conscience under the rod. The sin that under the rod conscience calis most in thy teeth, is very likely to be the sin that God is aiming at, as in the case of Joseph's brethren, Gen. xlvi. 21. who said one to another, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us: and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us.* Even as the man that has a sore finger, whatever touches his hand, the finger smarts; an evidence that there his sore lies.

(5.) Consider what sin it is that thou hast had most reproofs for from the word, most checks for by some lesser steps of providence, most challenges for from

conscience, and yet thou hast not reformed. That is likely to be it. For God's rods follow his rebukes, as Absalom did with Joab : Jer. xxii. 21. 22. *I speake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear : this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity, surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.*

(6.) Lastly, Consider the nature of the stroke or cross, for very readily there is a discernible affinity betwixt the sin and the stroke. Sometimes God punishes men in the same kind with their sin, as in the case of Adonibezek, Judg. i. 7. Sometimes in the occasion of their sin, as Eli's indulgence to his children was punished by the death of them. Sometimes their punishment is in what is most contrary to their sin, as David's sin in numbering of the people. Sometimes God measures to us in temporals, as we do to him in spirituals, Hos. iv. 12. 13. 1 Cor. xi. 30. and several other ways.

One that walks with God will have so much ado with these things, that they should very carefully observe them, for daily practice of taking up God's mind in what they meet with.

4. We must endeavour to comply with the designs of providence, Job xxxvi. 10. 11. Providences in favourable dispensations are God's cords of love and bands of a man, whereby he draws sinners to himself. In afflictive dispensations they are God's furnace for melting of souls, that they may take on suitable impressions. And O but it is sad when the effect of all is that, Hos. xi. 2. *As they called them, so they went from them.* Jer. vi. 29. 30. *The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain ; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.* That is a grievous complaint, Jer. v. 3. *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved : thou*

thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return. But he that walketh with God makes it his business to comply with the dispensations of providence in the design of them, to serve the Lord more cheerfully that God is kind to him, and to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness under afflictions.

5. We must notice the harmony of providences with the word, Psal xlviii. 8. *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts.* This is the way to get communion with God in providences. And a sweet feast they often afford to those that are thus exercised to discern them ; hence says David, Psal. xcii. 4 *Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work. I will triumph in the works of thy hands ;* and said Jacob to his brother Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 10. *Therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.* The word is the scheme and draught of the government of the world ; and the lines of providence are all drawn accordingly. So that whatsoever thou meetest with, it is an accomplishment of scripture promises, threatenings, or doctrines. And a child of God in applying them thus to the rule, may have sweet communion with God

6. We must follow the conduct of providence in subserviency to the word, keeping our eye on the promise, Psal xxxii. 8. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye.* To separate providence from the word, and then make it a rule, is dangerous, Jonah i. 3. But to follow the conduct of it with an eye to the word, is a notable part of the Christian's walking with God. Providence is the hand of the Lord whereby he opens the way in the wilderness to his people, that they may follow him. And go where they will, as long as they can thus keep their eye on their guide, they may judge themselves in the safest way.

7. Lastly,

7. *Lastly*, We must live in the exercise of the graces suitable to the dispensations of providence wherewith we are trysted, Eccl. vii. 14. Some dispensations are sweet and comfortable; let us by them be stirred up to love the Lord the more, Psal. cxvi. 1. Let any comfort that we find in the creature be used to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness to, desire of, and chearfulness in serving the Lord. Some are heavy, and require patience; some dark and doubtful, and require faith. Some take away our created supports, dry up our cisterns, and put out our candle; and such require trust in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, Hab. iii. 17. 18. Thus he that walks with God, follows him whithersoever he goes.

FIFTHLY, We must walk with God in the stations and relations wherein he hath placed us. These are the sphere that God hath given us to move in, in the world. And who so walks not with God in them, will never please him. There are two pieces of work which a Christian has to do.

1. One for himself, and that is his salvation-work, Phil. ii. 12. That is, to secure his eternal welfare in the enjoyment of God, and so to make sure his gracious state, to maintain a gracious frame and disposition, by getting incident controversies betwixt God and his foul done away, grace actuated, strengthened, and nourished, till he come to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. This lies in his personal walk.

2. One for God, and that is his generation-work, Acts xiii. 36. This lies in his relative walk. Whence we may conclude, that so far as a man or woman is defective in their relative duties, so far they are useless for God, and take up room in the world for no purpose. And so far as they do ill instead of good in their relations, they walk contrary to God. We see how the Lord in the works of nature has jointed together the creatures, the sun to shine by day, and the moon by night, the beasts to serve man, and the earth with the products thereof to serve both. The beauty

beauty of the world lies in every one's keeping their place, and being serviceable in the place wherein God has set them. And so relations are the joints of society; and they that would walk with God, must walk with him in them.

(1.) We must labour faithfully to discharge the duties of our stations and relations, as under the eye of God, who is our common Overseer, Witness, and Judge, Psal. ci. 2. God has shaped out our work to us, whether in the church, commonwealth, or family, wherein some are as eyes, some as hands, and some as feet. Though the work of others may be higher and more honourable than ours, our greatest honour will be to approve ourselves to God in our own part. God observes how every one does his duty, the husband, the wife, the master, the servant. And they that walk with God, will behave themselves in these things as under the eye of God, as well as when they are at prayers, &c. Col. iii. 22.

(2.) We must do the duties of our relations under a sense of the command of God. It is not enough that the husband love his wife, or the wife submit herself to her husband, &c. if conscience of duty towards God do not sway them thereto, Eph. v. 21. We must make God our great party in all these things, otherwise we do not walk with God in them. There is no relation one stands in, but God has set them their duty; and so the performance of these duties is as much the trial of our obedience, as the most religious actions we are capable of.

(3.) We must do the duties of our relations with an eye to the real good of our relatives. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, is the sum of the second table. No man is born for himself, but to be serviceable to God and his fellow-creatures, Rom. xv. 2. And the more useful we are to others, the more we serve God, and the more we are like him: for he does good unto all, even to the unholy and unthankful.

(4.) *Lastly*, We must do the duties of our relations with

with an eye to the honour of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. O the dishonour that is done to God by the little conscience that is made of relative duties, by crying relative sins. Should the fabric of the world run into confusion, sun, moon, stars, day and night, go out of their courses, where were the honour of God arising from the beauty of an orderly management of the world? But ah! how often are the foundations in churches, states, and families out of course, and there nothing but disorder and confusion, contention and opposition, every one going out of their course; and so the honour of God, and their own good and comfort lying buried in the ruinous heap? This is walking contrary to God.

This walking with God is particularly noticed concerning Enoch, Gen. v. 22. *And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.* He walked with God in his family, as a father and a husband, in a married state. So if thou be a walker with God, it will appear in the relations wherein thou standest; for grace makes a good husband, a good wife, a good master, a good servant, &c. And the duties of relations will readily try both the reality and strength of grace.

SIXTHLY, We must walk with God in all our actions, whether natural, civil, or religious, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Religion is to our conversation like salt to meat, necessary to season our whole life, whatever it is that we are about.

First; We must walk with God in our natural actions, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. These are common to us with the beasts; but we must not be like the beasts in the use of them, but walk with God therein. Now, if we would walk with God in these things,

1. We must do them under a sense of the command of God. Eating and drinking, &c. are duties
of

of the sixth command; and therefore we ought to do them because God has said, *Thou shalt not kill.* Where-ever there is a divine ordinance respecting any natural action, we ought therein to have respect to that ordinance, 1 Tim. iv. 5. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* Our bodies are the Lord's, and he binds us by all lawful means to preserve them; and then do men walk with God in these things, while they patch up the mud-wall house under the sense of the command of the Owner.

2. We must depend on the Lord for benefit by them, 1 Tim. iv. 5. Without the blessing on the means, the end cannot be obtained. Without God our meat cannot nourish us, nor our cloaths warm us; so that the emptiness of the creature points us to God at every turn, agreeable to what our Lord says, Matth. iv. 4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* It is no less than spiritual idolatry to overlook the Lord, and look for the benefit from the creature itself, Jer. xvii. 5. Hos. iv. 10. If he would say the word, we might eat and not be filled, sleep and not be refreshed. So that even in these we are called to walk by faith with God, looking for the benefit of God's ordinance and appointment about these things.

3. We must use them for God and his service; as the traveller takes his staff in his hand, not to be a burden or a carriage to him, but to help him on his journey. While the soul is in the body, it has a mighty dependence thereon; and so it is as the horse that must be cared for, to the end we may accomplish the journey, 2 Kings iii. 15. So walking with God in these things, would make us use them so, as may most fit us for the work of our Christian calling, having that as our great scope before our eye.

4. We must keep a holy Christian moderation in these things, Phil. iv. 5. We must be like Gideon's lappers,

lappers, even when waters of a full cup are set before us. People may easily fall into a sinful eagerness in these things, Gen. xxv. 30. and sink their hearts into these things, wherein they should only lightly go along with wariness, Luke xxi. 31. regulating ourselves in the use of them, by what is best to fit us for our salvation and generation work, which is the true rule of moderation. For the heart must not sit down on them as its end and rest; but pass through them as a means and way, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. 31.

5. We must ascend by the creature unto the Creator, from creature-sweetness to that infinite fulness that is in God, Zech. ix. ult. *How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.* Seeing all perfection in the creature is originally from God, it must be in him, and that infinitely. If there be any thing desirable in the streams, it must be more so in the fountain. If the light of the sun be so pleasant to the eyes, he who is light itself must be infinitely more so. Whatever pleasure or delight we find in meat, drink, &c. it points us to God, from whom that sweetness is derived, as drops from the ocean.

6. We must look on them as covenant mercies, and the fulfilment of promises, Deut. xxvi. 3. &c. God has secured our necessary comforts by promise, Is. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* Psal. cxxvii. 2. & lxxxiv. 11. So when we receive them, we should look on them as such; and then however coarse the meat be, being served up in the dish, not of common providence; but of the covenant, it will have an uncommon sweetness, and we will have communion with God in that which others find no more in than beasts do.

7. *Lastly,* We must be thankful for all our mercies, unto God as the giver of them, 1 Theff. v. 18. We must pay to him verbal acknowledgements, Hos. xiv. 2. Deut. viii. 10. and real acknowledgements, serving

serving him in the strength of our mercies, and that cheerfully, as he deals graciously with us in these things. What we have from him must be used for him, Rom. xi. ult.; and the more liberally he deals with us, the more cheerfully ought we to serve him, Deut. xxviii. 47. 48.

Secondly, We must walk with God in our civil actions, such as are competent to men in society, as trading, buying, selling, working, and in a word, managing our worldly business: that as we may not act like beasts in the former, so we may not act as men that know not God in the latter. Now, if we would walk with God in managing of our temporal affairs,

1. We must act in these matters as under a sense of a command or appointment of God in them. God has given each his calling, station, and work; and we are to act therein suitably in obedience to him, 1 Cor. vii. 24. doing our proper business as to the Lord, who is our great Master, Eph. vi. 7. Thus a man should go about his worldly business, whether for his own or another's advantage, because God has said, *Thou shalt not steal*; looking on it as a piece of his duty to God.

2. We must depend on him by faith, for direction in our business, Prov. iii. 6. We must pray for it, and trust God for it. Temporal affairs are not excepted, Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Whence is a dexterity and skill to manage a temporal business, to do a piece of work to purpose without or within doors? Is it not from the Lord? Jam. i. 17. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above.* Is. xxviii. 26. *For God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.* Common influences of the Spirit are as necessary to the exercise of a gift, as saving influences are to the exercise of grace. Remember the error the princes of Israel fell into, Josh. ix. 14. *The men took*

of their vi^tuals, and ask^d not counse^l at the mouth of the Lord; and Lot's unhappy choice, wherein he did not own God, Gen. xiii. 11. 12.

3. We must depend on the Lord by faith, for the success of our lawful endeavours, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Whatever men undertake with an eye to God in it, they may depend on him for the success of it, Psal. i. 3. An unsanctified confidence of success God often blasts, that he may let all men see in every thing, that *by strength no man shall prevail,* 1 Sam. ii. 9. and that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,* Eccl. ix. 11. And while people torment themselves with anxiety as to events, he brings their fears oft times on them, and lets them see, that by taking thought no man can add a cubit to his stature.

4. We must cut and carve in them as may be most for the honour of God and our souls welfare. This is the great mark that we would always keep in view, and according to which we must steer our course. Our eternal interest is our greatest, and all other interests must vail to it. The honour of God is the sheaf to which all other must bow; and the balance is to be cast on that side always on which these are, Matth. xvi. 26. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Where is the gain where the foot is lost to save the shoe? The world, with whom gain is godliness, and a penny more or less determines them in their affairs, would have thought Moses a foolish man for missing a good bargain, Heb. xi. 24. But he acted even as wisely, as a man who cares not for gaining of that pound, in gaining which he must lose a talent. Therefore consider in your worldly affairs, what will be best for your souls.

5. We must deal with men as under the eye of God, a holy jealous God, whether we be masters, servants, neighbours, &c. Eph. v. 15. Be strict and precise observers of common justice, according to the golden

golden rule, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.* Whatever occasions you have to do an unjust thing, let the eye of God be a sufficient restraint, Job xxxi. 21.—23. Let men pretend to what strictness they will otherwise, while they are not strict in their morals this way, they do more ill to religion, than perhaps they will ever be capable to do good.

6. We must observe Christian moderation in these things, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. Do not give yourselves wholly to them, to relish nothing but what favours of them, as those of Sodom did, Luke xvii. 28. Let them not steal away your heart, and justle out religion, like those mentioned Luke xiv. 16. &c. but remember still you have greater business in hand than that; and therefore dip no farther into them, than you may do with safety to your souls ease.

7. *Lastly,* We must be suitably affected with the providence of God in these things; ascribing the success of our affairs to the Lord, and giving him thanks for blessing the work of our hands; acknowledging disappointments and crosses in them to come from the same hand; taking them kindly as trials wherewith the Lord sees meet to exercise us, and labouring to know and comply with the design of them.

Thirdly, We must walk with God in our religious actions, and so distinguish ourselves from hypocrites, who do the things, pray, hear, &c. but do not walk with God in them. Now, if we would walk with God in religious duties,

1. We must do our duty out of respect to the command of God, Psal. cxix. 4. We must say in this case, as Simon did in another, Luke v. 5. *At thy word I will let down the net.* When people are led to duties from a custom, or some such low principles or motives, they do not walk with God in them. He that walks with God in them, discerns the stamp of divine authority on every duty, and that awes his heart into a compliance therewith.

2. We must seek the honour of God in all we do, John viii. 50. And indeed if we be let into a view of his glory in duties, the advancing of it will be our great aim. If thou be in duty with others, let God himself be your scope, and take heed of parting the glory betwixt him and thyself. If thou be alone, seek to give him the glory of all his perfections, by acknowledging of, and carrying as under the imputation of, the same.

3. We must go about our duty in his own strength, Zech. x. ult. Psal. lxxi. 16. renouncing all confidence in ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. No gifts are to be trusted to in this, for they may soon be blasted, and no bare gift can make one act graciously. Nay, habitual grace is not to be trusted to for that end; for the fire not blown cannot give us light. Actual grace needs still to be preserved and fed, else it will fail. Therefore we must lean on the Lord himself for it, Is. xlvi. 24. And we must stretch out the withered hand in duty, in hopes of influences from him, and set to sea in confidence of the blowings of the Spirit.

4. We must be spiritual in our duties, John iv. 24. Phil. iii. 3. One that walks with God will not take up with bodily exercise, or lip-labour; but endeavour after inward worship, which is the work of the heart. This lies in loving, fearing, trusting, desiring, humbling of the heart before him; believing his word, &c. And so he will reckon no more to be done in worship of God, than what is done with the heart.

5. We must seek to enjoy God in duties, and not be satisfied without it, Psal. xxvii. 4. When thou comest to the galleries, let thine aim be to see the King in his glory. And let not the empty chair of state satisfy thy soul; for nothing is sufficient for the soul, but the enjoyment of God himself, Psal. lxxxiii. 25. And if this be thine aim, thou wilt pursue it, and thrust forward till thou come even to his seat.

6. We must carry in duties as under the eye of God,

God, in a special manner, Psal. lxxxix. 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.* That looseness of heart, whereby it wanders here and there at duty, proceeds from the want of a due fear of God upon the soul; and is most contrary to walking with God: Jer. xii. 2. *Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.* The fixing of the heart under the impressions of his awful presence, that so the soul may carry suitably before him, is to sanctify the Lord in our heart, Lev. x. 3.

7. We must be frequent in duties, 1 Thess. v. 17. They that walk with God are frequent in solemn duties; but in the interval of these they will be taken up with others of a less solemn nature, such as thinking, meditation on God, ejaculations, &c. And thus they will be readily kept in tune for the return of the more solemn duties. And indeed people then cease to walk with God, when they begin to be more remiss and infrequent in solemn duties, and to be less careful of the frame of their hearts in the interval.

8. We must let new occurrences send us to our duty. This has been the practice of walkers with God, that whatever they have met with remarkable, it sent them to God; and therefore, says the prophet, *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me,* Micah vii. 7. And where can a gracious heart have such a vent, as before the Lord, whatever it be full of, whether joy or grief?

9. Lastly, We must observe the fruit of our duties, Psal. v. 3. carefully notice what speed we come in our applications to the throne; and what effect God's speaking from his throne has upon us. This is communion with God, to be sending word to, and receiving word from heaven; to be importing something thither in duties and the exercise of grace; and to be exporting something thence for the spiritual enriching of the soul.

THIRDLY, I shall consider walking with God in the properties thereof. Walking with God is religion ; and it is,

1. Practical religion, religion in deed, not in word only ; and there is no other sort of religion that will bring us to heaven ; hence says our Lord, John xiii. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Talk as we will, if we do not walk with God, we are naught. Jacob dissembling with his father was the lively emblem of a hypocrite, the voice Jacob's the hands Esau's. There is a great difference between saying and doing in religion. The former is easy, the latter is difficult.

(1.) One may talk well of God and the things of God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. He may have a clear head in matters of religion, that has a dark heart ; he may have a ready tongue to speak of them, whose feet are shackled with divers lusts, that he cannot walk in the way he speaks of, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. How many are ready in the history of the Bible, that are strangers to the mystery of practical godliness ? It is said of Cleopatra queen of Egypt, that people were chained to her rather by the ear than by the eyes. So many, if ye hear them speak, they are something ; but if ye look to their life, they are naught.

(2.) One may talk well for God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. But though they talk for him, they walk contrary to him. A man may preach for God, and teach others the way, that yet he never sets his foot on himself, Matth. xxiii. 4. Being like a boatman that ferries others over the water, but still with his own back towards the shore. Both ministers and professors may contend zealously for the faith of doctrine, while they are utter strangers to the life of faith ; like a physician prescribing remedies to others, while himself is dying of his disease, without applying of proper remedies.

(3.) One may talk well to God, that yet never walks

walks with him. Many speak fair to the Lord, whose walk is ever foul, never cleansed ; as in Israel's case, Deut. v. 27. 29. Fair professions, resolutions, promises, are often seen going up as dust. Look to their words, they are like Naphthali giving goodly words, but still as Rachel, though beautiful yet barren, Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

But religion being a practical thing, let no man think he has begun to be religious, till he come to practice, Jam. ii. 16. 17.—*Faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.*

2 It is inward and heart religion, 1 Pet. iii. 4. They that have no religion but what is visible to the world, have no true religion; for God is the invisible God, and walking with him must be so too, Rom. ii. 28. 29. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly : neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* It may be very hard to make any difference betwixt the life of a hypocrite and a sincere person : when the thread of hypocrisy is fine spun, it may pass the skill of the best discerner to discover it. And therefore one that walks with God, has a view beyond what he can see in others, or others can see in him. Ye must distinguish betwixt two things in religion.

(1.) The shell of it ; and that is all you can see of my religion, or I of yours. This shell is religious bodily exercise, preaching, praying, works of piety, justice, mercy, and charity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. These things are not very frequent in the world ; but at the great day many of them will be found like deaf nuts, which being cracked and their inside discovered, are cast into the fire.

(2.) The kernel of it ; and that is what none can see but God and their own consciences that have it ; and

and that is soul-exercise, heart-work, 1 Tim. iv. 7. Acts xxiv. 16. That only is godliness, and not the other. Preaching and praying, though it were with tears and the greatest seeming seriousness, is not godliness: it is the faith, fear, love, humiliation of heart, hatred of sin, resignation to the will of God, and conformity of the heart to his mind, which is in the preaching or prayer, that is religion in God's account. It is not the works of piety, &c. themselves, but the love to God for his own sake, and love to our neighbour for his, the holiness of the principle, manner, motives, ends, that is in these works, that is religion. The bodily exercise is but the vehicle, in which these sacred drops are taken.

Let no man deceive himself. No kernel grows without a shell, and none can have the power of godliness without the form of it: but there is many a shell without a kernel, and much form where there is nothing of the power.

3. It is heavenly religion, Phil. iii. 20. According to mens state and their nature, so will their actions be; for as is the tree, so will the fruit be. The heart of man, according as grace or corruption reigns in it, will tincture every thing that comes through it. Hence a natural man's very religion is carnal and earthly, Jam. iii. 15. His best things in religion smell of the earth. If a gale blow at any time on his soul, it rises low; if he sorrow for sin, it is the sorrow of the world; if he offer fire, it is strange fire. On the other hand, religion tinctures the very natural actions of one that walks with God; for this is a walking as one of another world.

Walking with God is indeed walking like one of the other world, namely, the upper world. The man conforms no more to the way of this world, Rom. xii. 2. keeps no more its course, Eph. ii. 2. but is coming through it as a pilgrim, and coming out of it, Cant. iv. 8. And,

(1.) His root in this lower world is loosed, that
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he may be in due time transplanted into the upper world. The believer is no more one of the *world's own*, John xv. 19. There is a certain sweetness to a man in his native soil; and so there is to natural men in the world, they are rooted in it by the greedy gripe their hearts take of it, Psal. xvii. 14. But when grace comes, that gripe is loosed, and fixes on heaven; and so that sweetness goes off, and the world turns the weary land to him, Is. xxxii. 2. They do not find that sweet in it which others find, and which they themselves sometimes found in it. Their hearts are on the way-gate.

(2.) The other world is the main thing he has in view, 2 Cor. iv. 18. While the present world bears most bulk in the eyes of others, the world to come bears most bulk in the eyes of those that walk with God. That is their designed and desired rest, that sways them in the course of their life; their desires, hopes, and endeavours centre there. They overlook, and put on a holy regardlessness both of the good and ill of the present world, if by any means they may escape the ill of the world to come, and attain the good thereof. The purchase they design lies there.

(3.) He is making away to the other world, as a man on his journey, Cant. viii. 5.; not only by the course of nature, as all others, but in heart and affections, by which the soul moves; hence the apostle says, Phil. i. 23. *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better.* It is true, when grace is not in exercise, a believer may be for building tabernacles here, he may be very unwilling to pass over Jordan; but then he is not walking with God, but standing still. Sometimes when believers are in the dark as to their state, or for some other reasons, they may be crying, as Psal. xxxix. 13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Nevertheless there is never a groan they give under the body of death, never a desire they have of perfection

fection of holiness, but there is wrapt up in it a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

(4.) He is conforming himself to the fashions of the other world, Psal. xlv. 10. It is his own country, being born from above; he is a pilgrim here, and therefore a man wondered at, as one of strange fashions. He sets himself to be like God in holiness, for that is the happiness of those that are above. As men serve an apprenticeship in a trade, that afterwards they may set up in it; so the life of a walker with God is an apprenticeship in holiness here, to set up in glory hereafter.

(5.) Lastly, He draws his great comfort from the unseen things of another world, Heb. xi. 27. The apostle will have those in the Christian race to look off to Christ, *who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*, Heb. xii. 2. When this world smiles, his chief encouragement is not from it, but from the other world. When it frowns, thence is his support, Hab. iii. 17. 18. This has made the saints choose rather poverty and reproach, confinement, banishment, prisons, and death, than to act against the laws of heaven; and to undergo these joyfully, while the world wondered how they could bear up under them.

4. It is lively and active religion, being a walking with the living God, wherein there is not only grace, but grace in exercise, Cant. i. 12. That is a remarkable character given to Christians, 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.* What? *stones*, and yet *lively?* *lively*, and yet *stones?* Yes. The power of godliness is a compound of these two. It makes men lively in God's matters, yet as stones for solidity: solid, yet active, such as their spirits will stir within them in these matters. There are three sorts that cannot be walkers with God.

(1.) Dead people; they must be borne to their place,

place, for they cannot go. Unregenerate graceless people cannot walk with God. What is the reason that so few walk with God? Why, truly the most part of gospel-hearers are dead people, Eph. ii. 2.; and till they be raised out of the grave of a natural state, it is not to be expected of them. There was a great cry in Egypt while one was dead in every family; but alas! there are many so in many families.

(2.) Sleeping people; they are not fit for walking: and sleeping Christians cannot walk with God, Cant. v. 2. Sometimes the saints are going pleasantly on their way in the exercise of grace; their desires, love, faith, &c. are awake and stirring. But through unwatchfulness, security creeps on; and then they must lie down, they can go no further, till the Lord waken them, Matth. xxv. 5. And this is one reason why there are so many that have the root of the matter in them, who are not walking with God at this day.

(3.) Lame and wounded people, that have got broken bones by some grievous fall into sin, Psal. li. 8. They that have a thorn of guilt in their conscience, cannot walk till it be drawn out. For the conscience is defiled, the power of grace weakened, the soul's communion with God marred; and they cannot recover their liveliness till they make new application of the blood of Christ, and renew their repentance.

5. It is regular religion, and uniform: for he that walks with God must needs walk by a constant rule, eying him not in some things only, but in all, Gal. vi. 16 Psal. xvi. 8. He gives one rule of walking, extending to man's whole conversation; and so he that walks with him, walks regularly, aiming at a holy niceness, preciseness, and exactness, in conformity to that rule in all things, Eph. v. 15. Gr. noticing carefully the prints of his feet with whom he walks. Now this imports,

(1.) A design and fixed purpose in religion, namely,

ly, a purpose of conformity to God in it, Acts xi. 23.—*and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* The words are emphatic, *that they would cleave unto the Lord*, q. d. abide by his side; *with purpose of heart*, laid down and determined beforehand. A man may do a good thing in religion, which yet will not be reckoned good indeed to him; because though he did it, he had no mind to please God in it. Religion's chance-customers will never be esteemed walkers with God, Lev. xxvi. *walking contrary*, Heb. *by accident, at all adventures.*

(2.) A constancy in religion, in opposition to wavering, Heb. x. 23. Hereaway and thereaway in religion is not walking with God, who *is of one mind, and who can turn him?* Job xxiii. 13. They that walk with men, or according to their own affections and inclinations, it is no wonder to see them at one time destroying what at another time they were building up; of one way in religion to-day, and another to-morrow; for these are changeable like the moon. But walking with God, people would go even forward, and keep their way they were on; neither going off on the right hand, because others go off at the left; nor going off at the left, because others go off at the right, Prov. iv. 25. 26. 27.

(3.) An evenliness in religion, in opposition to a detestable unequalness, Matth. xxviii. 23. To run with vigour in the lesser things of religion, and move like a snail in the greatest matters of it, is not walking with God. A wide conscience in substantials, and narrow one in circumstantial, is a conscience of a profane and godless make and mould; hence is that intimation, Hos. vi. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* A sincere conforming of ourselves to the duties required in the ten commands, summed up in love to God and our neighbour, is true holiness. Instituted ordinances are the means of holiness, which

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will be laid aside in heaven, when perfection in holiness is obtained. Now to be hot in these last, and cold in the other, is as detestable, as to be concerned to give meat to your neighbour, while in the mean time you stab him to the heart, to take away his life.

(4.) An universalness in religion, Psal. cxix. 6. He that makes no bones of balking some steps, walks not with God. They that confine their religion to their religious actions, and extend it not to their natural and civil actions, have no religion at all. What does it avail to pretend to a tenderness of conscience in one thing, and yet in other things to swallow a camel; to a tenderness in dealing with God, while no tenderness appears in their dealings with men? Psal. cxix. 128. Matth. xxiii. 24. This is one of the causes of Atheism and contempt of religion in the generation, Rom. ii. 23. 24. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonoureſt thou God? For the name of God is blaſphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written.*

6. It is laborious and painful religion; for it is no easy life they have whose trade it is to walk on their feet, Heb. vi. 10. And it is no easy religion to walk with God. Religion is not a business of saying, but doing; not of doing carelessly, but carefully, painfully, and diligently. If ye would be religious indeed, ye must put to your hands to work, set down your feet to walk, run the Christian race, ply all your strength to strive to enter in at the strait gate, wrestle with all your might against principalities and powers, &c. This will be evident, if ye consider these following things, (for an easy religion is the ruin of many).

(1.) Consider the scripture-notions of walking with God, in which the life of religion lies, and you will see they imply laboriousness. It is a working and abouring, John vi. 27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; Gr. work.* Here he that works not, shall

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not eat. It is not only a working, but a *working out*, Phil. ii. 12. a bringing the work to perfection, otherwise what is wrought will be lost, 2 John 8. Some labour is easier than other; but religion is compared to that which is the hardest labour.

[1.] It is compared to the husbandman's work, which is no easy labour, ploughing, sowing, reaping, Hos. x. 12. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy: break up your fallow ground.* There is no ground so hard to labour, as the hard heart is to the spiritual husbandman. No ground does so quickly and incessantly bring forth thorns and briers as the corrupt nature. And whereas the husbandman for ordinary finds his work as he leaves it, the Christian rarely finds it so.

[2.] To the soldier's labour, 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good fight.* He must watch while others sleep and take their ease, otherwise the enemy will be upon him. He must fight, he must not flee, but so fight as to overcome his spiritual enemies, Rev. iii. 21. He must pursue, Heb. xii. 14. namely, as one follows a flier, till he catch him. Heaven must be taken by storm, Matth. xi. 12. The gate is strait, there is no entering with ease; men must press into it, else they cannot come thither, Luke xvi. 16.

[3.] To the wrestler's labour, Eph. vi. 12. such as makes all the body to shake again, πάλη. They must put forth their utmost strength, as those that are agonizing, wrestling with death, Luke xiii. 24. This the Christian finds in wrestling with strong lusts and violent temptations.

[4.] To the runner's labour in a race, Heb. xii. 1. That requires patience and great eagerness, Phil. iii. 13. 14.; for they must so run as to obtain the prize, 1 Cor. ix. 24.

(2.) Consider the way the Christian has to walk in towards Immanuel's land, and ye will see that religion is a laborious business. For,

[1.] It is a difficult way; though plain in itself, yet

yet to us it is difficult to know, Cant. i. 7. 8. How much precious time do the travellers spend in disputing which is the way, that might be better improved in going forward? Nay, many spend all their days in disputing about the way, till the sun go down on them, and night overtake them, ere they have begun to set off. Many mistake the way quite and clean, Eccl. x. 15. some going in the way of bare morality, some of drowsy wishes, and some of formality, &c. And many good Christians in the way are brought to that pass, that they know not where to set down the next step; but have hard work to know the road they should take.

[2.] It is a wilderness-way, and therefore very solitary, Cant. iii. 6. Canaan was a type of heaven, and to it the Israelites came through the waste howling wilderness, where they had many a weary step. An emblem of the way to heaven. There the Christian often suffers hunger and thirst, there he is bit with fiery serpents, there he is attacked by furious enemies, and there he has the Jordan of death to pass.

[3.] It is a rising, an upward way, Cant. viii. 5. The way of sin is down the hill, easy, and therefore much frequented. But the way to glory lies up the hill; and hence so many are frightened from it at first sight; and many that seem to set fair off once, are quickly out of breath, and so retire. The temple, a type of heaven, was situate on a hill, Moriah, 1 Kings x. 5. Much hard travel had some of the Jews ere they got to Jerusalem, Psal. lxxxiv. 6. 7.; and when they came there, they had the hill of God to ascend into, Psal. xxiv. 3.

(3.) Consider what he has to walk through, that walks with God in the way of the life of religion. He will meet with troops of opposition, but he must break through them all. They must walk through,

[1.] Opposition from the devil, 1 Pet. v. 8. 9. No sooner does a soul set on the way of God in earnest, but the armies of hell are set in battle-array against him. The sluggard says, *There is a lion in the*

184 *Of walking with God, in the Properties of it.*

way, &c. but the Christian resolutely walks forward. But it is hard work when a poor Christian is engaged with a malicious and subtle devil, that has had five thousand years experience of the black art of temptation.

[2.] Opposition from the world: The world agents the devil's cause for him, and never ceases to take the ill cause of the dragon against Michael by the end. But they that mind for heaven, must set their face against the storm, and weather all the blasts that come from that quarter. They will not want the counsel of the ungodly, but they must refuse it, Psal. i. 1.; the mockeries of the wicked, but they must despise them, Psal. cxix. 51. Nay, sometimes it comes to persecution, and resisting even to blood; but they that walk with God, must go through even a sea of blood when called, Matth. xvi. 25. Daniel would not leave his prayers for thirty days, when praying was death by the law, Dan. vi. 7. 10.

[3.] Opposition from their own hearts lusts. A man's enemies are those of his own heart, Rom. vii. 24. Sometimes the false heart will be saying within the man, *Arise and let us go back to Egypt*: sometimes with Peter, *Master, spare thyself*; sometimes with Judas, *What needs all this waste?* sometime with Pharaoh, *I will not let you go*. But the Christian must over the belly of all these walk forward. Matth. xi. 12. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

(4.) Consider what he has to walk over. There are some things in the Christian's way to heaven which he may be cannot get through, but he must go over them.

[1.] Over the belly of discouragements, Heb. 35. Satan plies the engine of discouragement with all his force, and often mightily prevails by it, to make the Christian halt in his Christian course. And they may long sit still, if they mind to sit till they be removed. Nay, they must even break over the

and go forward, though it be hard labour to get over them, saying with David, Psal. xlvi. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

[2.] Over the belly of stumbling-blocks laid in the way, Matth. xviii. 7. The world is ruined by offences. Some give the offence, and others take it; i. e. some fall in the way, and others cannot go by the stumbling-block, but break their necks over it. But he that walks with God, when he cannot get them removed out of the way, he goes over them; but will not go off his way for them, as people generally do, Job xvii. 9. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

[3.] Over the belly of their credit and reputation sometimes. Many a time a Christian must make a stepping stone of his credit, to follow his duty; as David did, when he said unto Michal, *I will yet be more vile than thus, and I will be base in mine own sight*, 2 Sam vi. 22. And it is a general rule in the practice of godliness, that they must be fools who will be wise. That is hard; but sometimes they must even make a stepping-stone of their reputation with carnal and untender professors, and lay their account with their obloquy and reproach for following of their duty, as you may see Matth. xxvi. 7.—10.

[4.] Over the belly of their affections and inclinations. It was Levi's commendation, *Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. They have little sense of practical religion, that do not see they must put the knife to the throat of their own inclinations and affections many times, to follow duty laid before them by the Lord. These are not the rule of our walk; but they that walk by their own inclinations and affections, walk not with God, but walk as they

that are *sensual, not having the Spirit.* And this is hard work, and so much the harder when they meet altogether, as sometimes they do in the case of the godly.

(5.) *Lastly,* Consider the little strength we have to walk with, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.* We got all of us a bruise in the loins of our first parents. Even such as walk with God are healed but in part, the broken bones are but beginning to knit. Well, if the iron be blunt, he must put to the more strength; the less one has, he must make the better use of it. All these considerations shew that religion is a laborious and painful busines.

Well, Sirs, a slothful easy religion is a dangerous busines. Take heed to it; it will not be found walking with God. The sluggard is lost by his own sloth; *he will not plow by reason of the cold,* says Solomon; *therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing,* Prov. xx. 4. He is the unprofitable servant: see his doom, Matth. xxv. 26.—30. *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* He is unprofitable to himself, for he neglects his salvation-work; unprofitable to his Master, for he neglects his generation-work. Mark the sentence; he loved darkness to sleep in, he shall have his fill of it, *outer darkness.* For carnal mirth, he shall weep. He would not work because of the cold, in hell he shall gnash his teeth.

7. It is self-denied religion, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.* Thus our Lord Jesus walked when he was in the world; and *he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked,* 1 John ii. 6. Self-denial is one of the first lessons that Christ puts in the hands of his scholars, and they have need of it in practice through the whole of their conversation. In the religion of walkers with God these two things are remarkable, laboriousness and self-denial, which

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sweetly meet together in it, as the wings of the cherubims over the ark.

(1.) Laboriousness, working as if they were to win heaven thereby, 1 Cor. ix. 24. following holiness with all eagerness, as knowing that heaven is not given to loiterers, but labourers; and endeavouring to take the new Jerusalem as by storm. For walking with God, they look on themselves as under his eye, and therefore ply their salvation and generation-work. And the love of Christ constrains them to be serviceable to him, and to ply themselves for conformity to his image.

(2.) Self-denial.

[1.] Overlooking their work and labour, as if God had not required it, putting no confidence in it before the Lord, nor valuing themselves upon it in his sight, Phil. iii. 3.; but laying the whole stress of their acceptance with God on the merits of Christ. This must needs be so: for,

i.) He that walketh with God is acquainted with the holiness and spotless purity of himself, the exceeding breadth of his law, and the jealousy of his Holy Spirit; and therefore he cannot miss to see the imperfections of his best works in these bright glasses, and say as Psal. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? & cxxx. 3. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?*

2.) He honours the Son, living by faith in him, Gal. ii. 20. And that is one's going out of himself for all to Jesus Christ, out of his own ill in point of practice and self-loathing, and out of his own good in point of confidence, If. lxiv. 6.

[2.] Overlooking their own strength for working, as mere weakness, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Self-denial makes one go out of himself for sanctification to the Spirit of Christ, as well as for justification to his blood, 1 Cor. i. 30. If. xlvi. 24. For walking with God is a walking and leaning on him to be carried on the way, Cant. viii. 5.; a staying one's self upon him,

as the traveller doth upon his staff. This must needs be so: for,

1.) Who so tries the way of walking with God, will quickly find he is not man enough for the opposition he will meet with in the way, not able to go but as he is led, nay nor stand but as he is held up, John xv. 5. The least temptation or unmortified lust, how hard is it to one left to grapple with it in his own strength? Peter falls at the voice of a silly maid.

2.) The scripture declares, that there is no safety in, nor good to be had from, one's working merely from his own inherent stock, Prov. xxviii. 26. *He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool.* Nay there is a curse denounced on him that does so, which will cause that he will never bring his work to perfection, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness.* And therefore have we that watchword, Heb. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

8. It is humble religion, Micah vi. 8. For howsoever any may set up before men, they must needs vail their faces when they see themselves in the presence of a holy God. Proud and conceited religion is of the wrong stamp, for it is quite unlike the Spirit of the holy Jesus; and of the saints, who, the more religious they were, were always the more humble. And the more proud and conceited professors be of their religion, be sure they are so far strangers to walking with God. Now, this humble religion will appear,

(1.) In low thoughts of ourselves, and honourable thoughts of others, in whom the image of God appears, Phil. 2. 3. Paul counts himself the chief of sinners, though the chief of New-Testament saints. A high conceit of ourselves, with an undervaluing of others,

others, is a shrewd sign of little acquaintance with walking with God. For it is impossible but the man that walks with God, must see more evil in himself, than he can see in any other, that bears any thing of the holy image of God. But he that has the foul face, but looks not into the glass, may think it more beautiful than any that he sees.

(2.) In being denied to vain glory, Phil. ii. 3. He that walks with God will not have occasion to hunt after the applause of men, unless he go off his way, and so far leave his Leader. It is a sad sign of little walking with God, to affect so much honour and respect from men, and for one to trumpet forth his own praise ; a disposition smelling rank of a naughty heart, Prov. xxvii. 2. *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth.* John xii. 43. *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* It may nourish one to death, but not to life, like the chameleon, to live on air.

(3.) In refusing to stoop to nothing, whereby the honour of God, and the edification of the souls of others may be advanced ; as exemplified in our Lord's humbling of himself, Phil. ii. 5.—8. He that walks with God will be content to make a stepping-stone of his credit, ease, &c. for these ends, counting nothing too low for him whereby he may follow the Lord. But alas ! there is a cursed respect for ourselves, that so prevails with many, that they count some duties of religion below them. And their pretended credit must spread, though it should darken the heavens, and wrap up the glory of God in a cloud.

(4.) In a kindly accommodating of our spirits to humbling providences, Job i. 21. Sometimes the Lord leads his people very low, through afflictions, crosses, poverty, and wants. The humble will follow him whithersoever he goes. But the proud nothing will satisfy them, but rising, and they will blacken the heavens with their murmurings and complaints when they are falling. But if our lot be not brought up to our

our spirits, let our spirits be brought down to our lot. We are on our journey out of this world, and we may come as soon, and more safely, to an happy end of it, the low way, as the high way.

(5.) *Lastly,* In an absolute resignation to the will of God, saying in every thing, *Not my will, but thine be done,* Luke xxii. 42. Walking with God is a following of him, as the shadow does the body. It causes men put a blank in the Lord's hand, that he may fill up in it what he pleases. But so far as we come short of the great duty of absolute resignation to the will of God, we come short of walking with God.

9. It is constant religion. Walking is not a rising up and sitting down again, but a continued action, like that of a traveller going on till he come to his journey's end. Enoch walked on through the world, till he was not. It is constant in two respects.

(1.) Without interruption. It is not a religion taken by fits and starts, but going on evenly, Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me.* Some people's religion is like an ague, wherein they have their hot fits and their cold fits. They go to and fro; they will be one day for God, and another for the devil. Whatever good mood they be found in at any time, they do not abide at it, Hos. vi. 4. And so they can never bring it to any good account; for they are always beginning, ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth. These people's religion consists in two things.

[1.] Flashes, and that is all they have from Heaven; flashes of affections, like those mentioned, Psal. lxxviii. 34. *When he flew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.* The Spirit of holiness does not rest on them, but some light touches of his common influences they get, which do not abide. Hence with convictions sometimes, and with melted but unsanctified affections, their hearts will be as when in the time of great rain **every pool is full, but quickly dry again,** because it has

has no spring. Whereas it is otherwise with those that walk with God, John iv. 14. *The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

[2.] Overleaps into the holy ground; and that is all that Heaven has from them, Job xxvii. 9. 10. *Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?* They do not usually feed on God's pastures, but at the table of the world and their lusts. God saw this was the temper of the Israelites, which made him say concerning them, *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!* Deut. v. 29. They will be to-day crying *Hosannah,* to-morrow, *Crucify him.* Religion is not their element, and so they cannot abide with it, Job xxiv. 13.

(2.) Without defection and apostasy. We read of some, John vi. 66. that *went back, and walked no more with him.* They cast off religion, and laid it by for good and all. These people's walking with God, (if we may call it so), will be no more remembered, but to their condemnation, Ezek. iii. 20. They will never see heaven, Luke ix. ult. *No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* Lot's wife was an emblem of such; she looked back to Sodom, and God turned her to a pillar of salt, for a terror to apostates. For such he abhors, Hcb. x. 38. But they that walk with God will not be,

[1.] Bribed away from him, by the allurements of the world and flesh, which is one engine of Satan whereby he makes many apostates, as Judas, Demas, &c. How many are there who have sometimes, by their addictedness to the way of God, promised great things, and so have gone on for a time flourishing? But afterwards Satan has led them aside by temptations, and always farther and farther off the way,

way, till he has got them to cast off religion altogether.

[2.] Boasted away from him, by the severities they may meet with in following the Lord, Cant. viii. 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.* Sometimes Satan plays the fox, by cunning wiles to draw sinners to apostasy; and sometimes the lion, to drive them to it by hardships, mockeries, hard usage, and persecutions. But religion, where it is of the right stamp, will last, whatever methods be used to put it out.

10. *Lastly,* It is progressive religion; religion that is going forward, Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* There is a mark the soul aims at when it sets off in the Lord's way; and that is perfection in holiness; and walking with God is a pressing forward to it, Phil. iii. 13. 14. Such a one is adding a cubit to his spiritual stature. When the seed of grace is sown in the heart in regeneration, the man must walk with God, that so the seed may grow and shoot forth. And so in walking with God the new creature grows,

(1.) Inward, growing into Christ, Eph. iv. 15. uniting more closely with him, and cleaving more firmly to him as the head of influences, which is the spring of all other growth.

(2.) Outward, in good works, in life and conversation. Not only like Naphthali do they give *godly words*, but like Joseph they are as *fruitful boughs*.

(3.) Upward; for their *conversation is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. 3; in heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world.

(4.) *Lastly,* Downward, in humility and self-loathing. Thus he that walks with God makes progress in sanctification.

There is also in it a progress in experimental knowledge of religion, 2 Pet. iii. ult. The traveller the farther he goes on, he knows the country the better: and

and he that walks with God gets Christian experience. Not only is his head more filled with raw unfeigned notions, but his soul is stored with saving acquaintance with truth. The further he goes on, he becomes the more expert a traveller to the heavenly Canaan. He observes what has worsted, and what bettered his soul's case; and so will labour to eschew the one, and follow the other. And when he comes to a dark step, he can bear out the better, that it is not the first he has gone through.

Thus far of the nature of walking with God.

II. I shall next confirm this doctrine, That the life of religion lies in walking with God. In order to this consider,

1. That religion is not a matter of speculation, but of practice. Whatever light it brings into the mind, it is for moving the heart and affections. And therefore it is called *the doctrine according to godliness*. And the greatest mysteries of our religion are *mysteries of godliness*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. I think the devil may be a greater speculative divine, than the best of us can pretend to be. And the apostle supposes one may *understand all mysteries*, and *all knowledge*, and yet be nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. So little worth is the knowledge of religion without the practice, the word without the power.

2. All other practice of religion, without walking with God, is but bodily exercise, little worth, 1 Tim. iv. 8. The Jews wrote on their synagogue-doors, *Prayer without intention is as a body without the spirit*. And where walking with God is wanting, there is the carcase of religion, but the soul of it is away. It can never be pleasing to God, because it is not agreeable to his nature, John iv. 24.

3. The great difference betwixt the sincere Christian and the hypocrite lies here, Phil. iii. 3. *We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

flesh. What makes the sincere Christian differ from the hypocrite in his walk? Is it that he performs external duties? No; you cannot pitch upon one of these, but a hypocrite may perform the same? Is it that he knows and can speak of religion better? No; a hypocrite may excel a good Christian in these gifts. Is it that he has sometimes a flood of affections? No; Pharaoh, Esau, and the stony-ground hearers wanted not these. But the hypocrite never comes up to walking with God, which the sincere does, though not always.

4. Without this there is no sanctification, because without it there is no communion with God, and so no sanctifying influences. A man may pray many a prayer, hear many a sermon, and be many a year a professor of religion, and yet never be a whit the more holy, unless he walk with God. All without that in this point, is but the washing of a blackmoor, labour in vain. For spiritless lifeless walking will never heal our unholy nature. Hence when the heart is away from God, the man is as *the heath in the wilderness, and shall not see when good cometh,* Jer. xvii. 5. 6.

5. This is that part of religion that will remain in heaven for ever, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. Thus the happiness of heaven is held out under the notion of *walking with God*, Rev. iii. 4. All divine institutions tend to this. For this was the course the first Adam was set on, but broke off from; this course the second Adam held; and to be brought back to this will be man's greatest happiness. So that without controversy the soul of religion lies here.

6. *Lastly*, Our spiritual life lies in communion with God. In ourselves we are dead spiritually, being slain in Adam. Now our life is in Christ, Col. iii. 4. and we cannot partake of that life, but by communion with him, Gal. ii. 20. *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* It is

is that communion with Christ that makes men truly lively, and their religion, religion indeed, in so far as it makes men walk with God.

I shall now make some improvement of this subject, in uses of information, reproof, and exhortation.

USE I. of information. This lets us see,

1. That the religion of those is little worth, that are utter strangers to walking with God. It is but the carcase of religion without the soul. The apostle speaks of *vain religion*, Jam. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* This is such. It is vain with respect to God's approbation, for he will never approve of it, Rom. ii. 28. 29.; and vain with respect to their own salvation, it will never bring them to heaven, nor abide the trial, Matth. vii. 22.

2. True religion lies not in a form, but has a power with it causing a holy walk, 2 Tim. iii. 5. True religion is not a vain ineffectual thing, but has a commanding power with it. It is in the heart like the centurion, when it says to the man, *Go, he must go;* and when it says, *Come, he cometh.* It has a restraining power, it binds up the man from sin. Job was tempted to blaspheme, but the power of godliness restrained him. It sets the man in God's way, it keeps him on it, and causes him to go forward in it.

3. That no man has more true religion than what influences his walk. God will never measure people's religion by fair words or a shining profession, but by the course of their life and actions, in faith, love, and other moral duties. God has written his law in the Bible, has transcribed it again into the renewed heart, and they write it over again in their holy conversation.

4. There is little of the life of religion in the world, there is so little walking with God in it. There are

few that have the form of godliness in comparison of those that want it; and yet but few of those who have the form, that have the power too. How few are there that eye God in all things, whose hearts go along with him as the shadow with the body, that walk with him in ordinances, in providences, in their stations and relations, and in their actions, natural, civil, and religious! O how rare is practical, inward, heavenly, &c. religion!

USE II. Of reproof. Hence we may reach a reproof to several sorts of persons, that do not walk with God.

1. Those that have never yet risen up from their sin. Walking with God is a motion of the soul from sin to sanctification, If i. 16. 17. It is like the going up a stair, where the first step raiseth a man from the ground, and so he goes up by degrees till he come there where he would be. Heaven is the upper room, faith and holiness are the stairs, and the state of sin is the ground. But alas! many have not come the length of the first step yet; they are still in their sins, under the guilt of them, and under the power of them. They have not with Lazarus come out of the grave, with Matthew left the receipt of custom, nor with the palsied man risen out of their bed; and far less with Enoch do they walk with God.

(1.) Consider, we cannot say of you, *Ye are not far from the kingdom of God;* for truly ye are even as far from it as Adam led you and left you. The way to the pleasant land is long, and your day is far spent; but to this day ye have not entered on the way, nor stirred a foot from your old sins. Are ye not afraid, that your day go ere ye are able to overtake the journey?

(2.) If ye lie still, ye will never see heaven. As soon shall heaven and hell meet, as you shall get to heaven in that state and case. If ye sit still ye die; and therefore rise and walk, and flee from the wrath to come.

2. Those

2. Those whose life is a mere wandering, Eccl. x. 15. *The labour of the foolish wearieh every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.* Many spend their days thus wandering: among the creatures their souls wander, and from one they go to another; they take a miserable round in the vanities of this world, but never go beyond them to God. They wander up and down in the way of sin; sometimes they fall into one miserable course, sometimes into another, but never into the course of holiness. They walk in a round, whereof the centre is hell, and the circumference sin and vanity. All their life they go from one sin and one vanity to another, and at death, when they leave the world, they are in the same place they were in when they came into it: *i. e.* As they were born in sin, they die in it, and tumble down to hell, their miserable life being not a walking with God, but a wallowing in one puddle of sin all along.

(1.) Your thus wandering is a sad sign, that your natural blindness is not removed, Rev. iii. 17. Your plague is in your head, and so your heart cannot be right. Ye have never yet discovered the excellency of Christ the Captain of our salvation, nor the glory of the land that is afar off, and ye know not the way leading to it. Therefore your case is sad.

(2.) Remember the generation that wandered in the wilderness died there, and never saw the land of Canaan, 1 Cor. x. 5. This will be your doom, if ye continue. Ye are walking in a mist among fearful precipices and fiery serpents; how can ye miss to fall?

3. Backsliders, that have turned their backs on God's way, John vi. 66. These, instead of walking with God, fall away from him, back to their old sins. They gave up their names to him, listed themselves under his banner, but now they have turned runaways. They came under bonds to God and his way; but they have broken his bonds, and cast away his cords.

cords from them. They once appeared on God's side, but they have got over into the devil's camp.

(1.) Your sin is greater than if ye had never set off in the Lord's way. Ye know that relapses into a disease are most dangerous, and most hopeless; and so it had been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you, 2 Pet. ii. 21. For then men sin over the belly of more light than before; they cast a particular infamy upon the way of God, as if they would make the world to believe from their experience, that Christ's yoke is intolerable.

(2.) Your condemnation will be the greater. It is a fearful word, Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Prov. xiv. 14. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* As the foremost fall is from the highest place, so the deepest plunge into the lake of fire is from the threshold of heaven. And when the backslider is taken in the snare of destruction, it will be a peculiar worm in his conscience for ever, that once in a day he was well nigh escaped.

4. Refusers of the Holy Ghost, whom God is using all means with to draw them to his way, but they will not come on it, Jer. ii. 25. *I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* Not only are they called by the word, but by providence. God meets some in their evil ways, like the angel with the drawn sword in his hand meeting Balaam, and yet they will not leave it. God hedges up their sinful ways with thorns, yet they break through the thorn-hedge. Their consciences tell them they are wrong, and give them many a secret blow to drive them into the way; but they follow their corruptions over the belly of their consciences.

(1.) This is dreadful and dangerous work, as being a fighting against God and against yourselves, Acts vii. 51. But though the potsherds of the earth

strive among themselves, it is miserable folly to strive with their Maker. The voice of the word, providence, and conscience is the voice of God; take heed how ye entertain the same.

(2.) The issue must needs be terrible, if it be continued in, Job ix. 4. For when God judgeth, he will overcome. What can be expected of it, but that God be provoked to cease striving with you, and to lay the reins on your neck, Gen. vi. 3. Psal. lxxxii. 11. and afterwards call you to an account as wilful rejecters of salvation?

5. Enemies to the way of God, who not only do not walk in it themselves, but hinder others to walk in it, as the scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xiii. 13. There are agents for the devil in the world, who have a malignant hatred against the power of godliness, and set themselves to quench the Spirit in others, by mocking, tempting them to sin, &c. Consider,

(1.) That is the devil's trade, and therefore a sad indication of one that is a child of the devil. Let such hear what the Spirit of the Lord says to them, Acts xiii. 10. *O full of all subtlety, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* God is especially an enemy unto those that are enemies to his ways, and so set themselves to advance the devil's kingdom.

(2.) The blood of souls will be a heavy load; and such as turn others from the way of God, their blood will be upon their head. And those that set themselves that way, they need not doubt but that in such a corrupt world they will always be successful with some, Luke xvi. 27. 28.

6. Loose and licentious professors, who walk scandalously that the world may see they do not walk with God, Jer. vii. 8. 9. 10. *Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;*

not ; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations ? There are many that profess religion, that it were telling religion they did not pretend to it. For hearken to their words, take a view of their life, there is no tenderness to be seen there. The voice is Jacob's, but their rough hands declare them to be profane Esau's. There is nothing that looks like holiness about them, but the profession of the truth ; but their tongues and their lives are profane. Who so sees them, may see their light hearts and offensive lives have nothing of the balsam of the power of godliness. Consider,

(1.) A loose and licentious life, under whatever profession it appear, argues a godless and graceless heart, Phil. iii. 18. 19. It is an easy thing for people to make a profession, which costs them not the life of a lust ; to addict themselves to this or that opinion, while they do not addict themselves to the study of a holy life ; to pin a new creed to an old life. But were grace in the heart, and they made partakers of the new nature, it would make them study holiness in all manner of conversation.

(2.) What will the end of that way be, think ye ? See Psal. cxxv. ult. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* And if there be a hotter place in hell than another, the hypocrite that has a profession of religion, but a licentious life, shall get it, Matth. xxiv. ult. And their profession will serve but to make them so much the more marks for the arrows of God's vengeance.

7. Close hypocrites, whose outward conversation is blameless, but in the mean time they are strangers to the life of religion, and walking with God, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,* 2 Tim. iii. 5. They go about duties, but they are strangers to communion with God ; they walk blamelessly, but walk not with God ; they abound in bodily exercise,

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exercise, but are estranged to spiritual worship ; they exercise gifts, but they have nothing of the exercise of grace. Their souls are estranged from the life of God, and are dead within them ; and they are like some dead beasts, there is nothing of them profitable but the skin, *i. e.* the outward form.

(1.) Consider that religion may serve to blind your own eyes, and the eyes of the world, but not the eyes of God. The close hypocrite will be like Ahab in disguise, but the arrow hit him for all that ; for there is no deceiving the eyes of the Almighty.

(2.) It will have a miserable issue. God loves to discover hypocrites, Rev. iii. 16. *Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* Sometimes he withdraws his restraint that he has on them, and turns out their infide in this life before the world, as Judas, Ananias and Sapphira. But he will not fail to do it at the great day, when every one shall be judged according to their works.

8. *Lastly*, Gracious persons, whose grace is not in exercise, who though they be spiritually alive in respect of their state, yet are not lively, but dead in their frame, Cant. v. 2. They are not walking with God as sometimes they have been, but are fallen asleep, and are going after the way of their own hearts. O Sirs, ye are off the way, and I will tell you how ye may know it. A gracious person may know that he is not walking with God,

(1.) By the decay of his love to his Guide. This was God's controversy with the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4. *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* And may not the Lord say to many of his people this day, as Jer. ii. 2. *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown?* While the soul walks with God, it keeps its eye upon Christ, and seeing him cannot but love him. But the soul loses sight of Christ ;

Christ ; then out of fight, out of mind ; and what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. A sad sign that ye are off the way.

(2.) By decay of love to the fellow-travellers, Matth. xxiv. 12. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* There has been a day wherein the people of God have dearly loved on another, delighted to pray, converse, &c. together ; and the wrong done to any of them was, by reason of their sympathy, as done to them all. But alas ! where is that now ? Christian love is much decayed. What is the reason ? Why, as travellers as long as they are going out the road together, have a particular kindness one for another : but when they begin to stay by the way and scatter, one going to his business, and another to his, that wears off. Even so the Lord's people taking different ways, and scattering from one another, their love to each other cools.

(3.) By the decay of zeal for the honour of their Leader. If one would affront a captain on the head of his troop, all the soldiers hearts would stir within them. But when he is left alone, there is none concerned to resent the injuries done to him. I never like that zeal, that overlooking the substantials of religion, burns out on the lesser things. But this I will say, that were there more walking with God among us, there would be more zeal for the great things of religion ; and if so, then more for the lesser things too. Were we more concerned for the kingdom of Christ within us, we would be more zealous for the kingdom of Christ without us.

(4.) By the decay of tenderness, and care to please the Lord, Col. i. 10. While David was walking with God, he was tender of the least sin, his heart smote him when he had cut off the lap of Saul's garment. But at another time he lay long under horrible guilt in the matter of Uriah, his heart being hardened. Sometimes Christians could have had no rest without the enjoyment of God in duties ; but alas !

alas! at other times they are formal in performance of their duty as a task. And an evil deed will not be so heavy to them, as a rash word or vain thought would sometimes have been.

(5.) By the decay of diligence in duties, instead whereof slothfulness creeps in, Eccl. x. 18. He that walks with God will be diligent to note every step of his way; so it is an ill sign when the heart turns careless. He will be much conversant with God in the duties of religion, often found on the road to the throne, because he has much business with heaven: but when he walks not with God, he remits of his diligence, and comes far short of his former pains in his soul-matters.

(6.) By a decay of heavenly-mindedness, instead of which there creeps in carnality and earthly-mindedness. Walking with God makes a heavenly life, Phil. iii. 20. And while a child of God holds at it, it tinctures all his thoughts, words, and actions with a favour of heaven, Cant. iii. 6. But when that fails, all these favour of the earth.

(7.) Lastly, By a decay of liveliness and earnestness in duties. Sometimes a child of God is like Jacob wrestling for the blessing; he is very peremptory, and will not take a nay-say, Gen. xxxii. 26. Sometimes again as Ephraim like a *filly dove, without heart*, Hos. vii. 11. having neither heart nor hand to ply the throne of grace: A sad sign of not walking with God.

Now to such I would say two things.

[1.] Horrid ingratitude is stamped on your ceasing to walk with God, Jer. ii. 31. *O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?* The pleasantest and most profitable days a Christian ever has, are those wherein he walks with God; and when he gives over that, his real well days are done, Hos. ii. 7. Then his bones flourish as an herb, but otherwise they wither like the grafts. Therefore may we

we say, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?* Deut. xxxii. 6.

[2] It is easy to go off the way, but not so to get on it again; it is easy to halt and sit down, but not to rise up again and walk. Ye had need to awake in time, lest the Lord give you a fearful wakening, either by some heavy stroke, or, which is worse, by letting you fall into some grievous guilt, as he did David.

USE ult. of exhortation. Study the life of religion, in walking with God. Walk not after your own lusts, nor in the way of the world, either its way of profaneness, or its way of formality; but go through the world walking with God. I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Ye are going fast through the world, and ere long will be at your journey's end. Time runs with a rapid course; and whether ye sleep or wake, ye will soon find yourselves pass the border of time, Job ix. 25. 26. *My days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away at the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.* The watch going wrong may run as fast as when she goes right: and the man that walks after his own lusts, makes as great speed to the end of his journey, as he that walks with God. And since we must walk through the world, and cannot abide here, why will we not chuse the best company in our way, and walk with God?

2. Walking with God is the only way to get safe to our journey's end, Heb. ii. 10. It was only Caleb and Joshua that got to Canaan, for they followed the Lord fully. All the world is on a journey; but there are two ways, and two companies. There is the way of holiness, and all the saints walk there, with the Lord on their head; and the end of this way is salvation. And there is the way of sin, a broad way, wherein are many roads, bare civility, morality, profaneness, and formality: all the unregenerate walk there, and the god of this world on their head, and

the end is destruction. Chuse ye with whom ye will walk.

3. Religion is not a matter of speculation and talking, but a matter of practice and walking with God, Psal. cxvi. 9. *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.* Your eternal state lies at stake, which ye will never bring to a comfortable issue without this. Till ye enter on this way, ye are to begin to be religious, how long soever your standing in a profession has been. After children are born, it is long ere they begin to walk; but as soon as one is born again, becomes a child of God, he immediately falls a walking with God.

4. There is a pleasure, a refined, undreggy pleasure, in walking with God, Prov. iii. 17. *Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* This pleasure arises from the testimony of conscience, which is a feast to the soul, 2 Cor. i. 12. enough to make a sick man whole; from the intrinsic pleasantness in the way of holiness, which has a surpassing beauty in the eyes of those that are capable to discern, Psal. cxix. 97. & 165.; and from the soul's communion with God it finds in that way, Psal. iv. 6.

7. This makes the hardest steps of it pleasant, and makes the soul perceive a paradise within the thorn-hedge of troubles that attend it, 2 Cor. xii. 10. *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake:* for when I am weak, then am I strong. And that religion is so sapless to most of us, and such a burdensome thing, must needs be imputed to unacquaintedness with walking with God.

5. There is great profit and advantage that attends it, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things.* Walking with God makes a flourishing ease of the soul, when others are withering and pining away in their iniquity. It is an enriching trade for bringing in sanctifying influences to the soul; it promotes each part of sanctification, vivification, and mortification.

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It is the best evidence of sincerity, as Gen. vi. 9. *Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.* And though it does not give us a title to heaven, (it is the blood of Christ that does that), yet it is an evidence of our title, without which we cannot make good our plea for heaven.

Object. But what can it do to us for a through-bearing in the world? *Answ.* Very much, *having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. iv. 8. Those that walk with God have a promise of provision in this world, Psal. xxxvii. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Matth. vi. 30. *Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* It is no may-be, but as sure as the covenant can make it, Is. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* It is true, God's bond is not always paid as it were in money; but it is always paid in money-worth, if it be not so. If they get not the thing itself, they get as good, 2 Cor. vi. 10.—*as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

Nay, all the profit of religion to one's self ariseth from walking with God. For what does it avail to have the knowledge of religion in the head, while it sinks not into the heart? That can no more sanctify a soul, than painted fire can burn. All the profit of it then must be to others, as that of the carpenters that built Noah's ark: for he and his family only were preserved in it from the deluge, while the builders were swept away by that universal flood.

6. Walking with God is the best security in evil days. There are finning and ensnaring times: who can be safe in them as they that walk with God? even as in a dark day, those that keep closest with their guide, are likeliest to get safest through, Prov. xi. 3. *The integrity of the upright shall guide them.* There are suffering times, days of common calamity; and then

then those that walk with God are likeliest to be brought through, as Noah, Gen. vi. 9.

7. *Lastly*, This is the way all have taken, that have walked through the world to Immanuel's land. God's children only are heirs; and they that are his children must follow him, Eph. v. 1. There is no walking with God in heaven, but for those that walk here with him in holiness. And therefore remember, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*, Rom. viii. 13.

I shall now shut up all with some directions and advices for walking with God.

1. Labour to be sure ye be Christians indeed, and once fairly set on the way, by closing with Christ. Renounce the world and your lusts; and look on yourselves as men bound for another world, under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's hosts, Cant. iv. 8.

2. Lay it down for a certain conclusion, that religion is quite another thing than a parcel of external performances. It is a conforming of the soul to the image of Christ, and of the life and conversation to the holy law, by a participation of the virtue of his blood and Spirit. And therefore there must be constant endeavours to abide close by Jesus Christ, in the exercise of faith, love, and universal tenderness, not only in life, but in heart, Prov. iv. 23.

3. Being set on the way, labour to hold by it. Ye must learn not to be shamed out of God's way, by the reproaches of the world. Care not for the name of singularity, and be not ashamed to be fools in the world's eyes, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 19. not to be bribed nor boasted out of God's way, by any advantage or loss in the world, Heb. xi. 24.

4. Closely ply the work of mortification, Gal. v. 24. What is your need of Christ, if it be not to save you from your sins? Matth. i. 21. Beware of making Christ the minister of sin, by going the round betwixt sinning and confessing, without suitable

able endeavours for mortification. Mortification is no easy busines ; but most necessary.

5. Beware of indulging yourselves in those things that are accounted but small sins, and abstain from the appearances of evil. No man will walk with God, to whom any sin is so small that he will make no bones of it. And those that stand not to go frankly into the borders of sin, will very readily step over.

6. When ye fall lie not still, but get up again by a new application of the Redeemer's blood, and renewing your repentance. For no man can walk so but he will stumble ; but then the suitable remedies are to be improved for recovery.

7. Be frequent in self-observation and examination. Take notice often how the pulse of your affections beats. Retire into yourselves, and observe the way of your hearts and lives, Hag. i. 7. And examine yourselves often as to your state and case, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Ask yourselves whether ye be going forward, or backward, what profit ye make of duties ?

8. Be diligent observers of providence, Psal. cxvii. ult. towards yourselves and others.

9. Be tender of waiting on the Lord, to know sin and duty in particular cases.

10. Be diligent in all religious duties, missing none of them, and being frequent in them all. For these are the trysting-places for communion with God, which they that would walk with him must diligently attend.

11. Prepare for duties before ye set about them; not only public duties, but private and secret ones. For the rushing on these without consideration, is the high way to make them vain and fruitless.

12. Labour to be spiritual in all things ; in religious duties seeking to exercise grace, and enjoy communion with God ; and even in other things, to act as under his eye, and by influence of his command.

13. *Lastly,* Live by faith, 2 Cor. v. 7. For it is by faith that the soul is set and kept in this walk.

DISCOURSES ON PRAYER.

Of the Nature of Prayer in general; with
the Import of praying without ceasing.

The substance of two Sermons preached at Etterick,
in the year 1727.

I THESS. V. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

THESE words are an exhortation briefly delivered, as laws use to be; and therein we have, 1. A duty proposed, *Pray*. 2. The manner of it, *without ceasing*.

I. We have the duty itself, *Pray*. It may be asked, What is prayer? I answer, It is “ an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.” Here I shall consider,

1. The object of prayer, or whom we are to pray to.
2. The parts of prayer.
3. The matter of it.
4. In whose name we are to pray.
5. The several kinds of prayer.

First, I am to consider the object of this duty, or whom we are to pray to; that is, God; not to saints and angels, as the Papists do; for prayer is a part of religious worship, and therefore due to God only, Matth. iv. 10. and he only knows all things, and is present every where to hear us, If. lxiii. 16. To all the three persons in the Trinity prayer is due. That it

is so to the Father, no body doubts. That it is due to Christ, the Son, appears from Stephen's calling upon him in his last moments, and saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Even Christ the Mediator is to be worshipped, though his divine nature is the reason why he is worshipped, Heb. i. 6. *And let all the angels of God worship him.* The Holy Ghost also is to be worshipped, as appears from the apostolical benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.—*The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.*

In respect of the object of worship, people would do well to satisfy themselves, in their addresses to God, with the belief of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, who are but one object of worship, and not think to comprehend God, but to make use of the names and titles he has taken to himself in the word. Beware of imaginations of God or the three persons, and of dividing the object of worship, as if praying to the Father, you did not also pray to the Son and the Holy Ghost.

It is most necessary our prayers begin with such a description of God, as may both strike fear and dread in our hearts, and confidence of being heard; as, *Our Father, which art in heaven; O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy, &c.* Dan. ix. 4. And this will readily be the case, if we have due thoughts of his glorious Majesty and infinite excellency.

Secondly, The parts of prayer are three, (1.) *Confession*, (2.) *Thanksgiving*, and (3.) *Petition*.

1. *Confession*, Dan. ix. 4. 5. *I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments: we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, &c.* It well becomes sinful dust and ashes, in addresses to God, to come with a blush in the countenance, and tears in the eye, and confession in the mouth. It is necessary

necessary to humble us in the sight of God, and it is the humble only that are heard, Psal. x. 17. Confession is the vomiting up of the sweet morsel, and God has joined pardon and confession together, 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* God's ears are shut to those whose mouths are bound up from this. Some say they cannot pray: O can ye not confess what you are, have done, and daily are doing? How can ye want matter of prayer, while ye have so many sins to confess?

2. *Thanksgiving*, Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Every man is God's debtor for mercies, as well as sins; the least return ye can make, is to acknowledge debt. He that is unthankful for what he has got, cannot think to come speed in addresses for more.

3. *Petition*, wherein prayer properly consists. It is an offering up of our desires to God. Wherein we may note the act of prayer, *offering up our desires*. The prayer that God makes account of is first in the heart, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. *I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.* It is a pouring out of the heart to God, Psal. lxii. 8. The Spirit of God moves on the waters of our affections, and then they are poured out before the Lord, as the water of the well of Bethlehem was by David. Many times our prayers come as mud out of a vessel; but as water they should flow freely. Then

In prayer there are real desires of what we seek of God, which desires are offered to the Lord. The mouth must not speak out any thing but what is the desire of the heart. It is dangerous to mock God, who knows the heart; to confess sin, and not have the heart affected with it; to seek supply of wants from him, and not have the heart impressed with a due sense of the want of them. There are two sorts of desires.

(1.) There

(1.) There are *natural* desires, which are the mere product of our own spirits, offered unto God, but not regarded as prayer (Hos. vii. 14.) by the Lord. These may be not only for temporal things, but for spiritual also, as those who said to Christ, *Lord, evermore give us this bread.* A natural man, from a gift of prayer, may seek grace and glory, as a bridge to lead him over the waters of wrath; but coming only from their own spirits, such a prayer is not acceptable.

(2.) There are *spiritual* desires, Zech. xii. 10. which the saints breathe out unto God, having them first breathed into them by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26. And these may be for temporal things, as well as spiritual, accepted, seeing they are put up in a spiritual manner. These are always sincere and fervent, so as the soul earnestly craves the things sought.

Thirdly, The matter of prayer, or what we are to petition and seek for. These are, the things that are agreeable to God's will. To pray for the fulfilling of unlawful desires, is horrid, Jam. iv. 3. But the will of God is the rule of our prayers, 1 John v. 14. *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* We find the will of God in his commands and promises. Whatever God has commanded us to seek, whatever he has promised, that we may and ought to pray for. These are, (1.) Spiritual mercies, grace, glory, the increase of grace, comforts, &c. (2.) Temporal mercies, health, strength, &c. mercies relating to our bodies and temporal estate in the world.

Some have no freedom to bring their temporal concerns to their prayers. *Answ.* That we may and ought to do it, is plain,

1. In that God has given them a place in his covenant; they are promised as well as spiritual mercies, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* If. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him,*

him, his waters shall be sure. Psal. i. 3. *Whatsoever he doth shall prosper.*

2. It has been the practice of the saints in all ages. Memorable is Agur's prayer, Prov. xxx. 8. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.*

3. Christ teaches us so to do in that pattern of prayer, Matth. vi. 9. &c. *Give us this day our daily bread;* where we may observe, that they ought to have a place in our prayers daily.

4. God has commanded it, Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* Compare ver. 30. 33. &c. *I will multiply the fruit of the tree,* &c. It is a general command, *In all thy ways acknowledge him,* Prov. iii. 6.

5. Sin and duty are very large. Men are under a law as to their management of temporal concerns, and light and wisdom should be sought for the same from the Lord, Psal. cxii. 5. *A good man will guide his affairs with discretion.* No doubt many things go the worse with us, that God is so little owned in them. If that be true, that *God doth instruct the plowman to discretion, and doth teach him,* Is. xxviii. 26. there is good reason we pray, that *God may establish the work of our hands upon us,* Psal. xc. ult. Surely those Christians that neglect it, deprive themselves of many experiences of the Lord's kindness. For the temporal mercies they meet with, were they answers of prayer, would be so many experiences of the Lord's love, Is. xli. 11. Nay, I think it were a piece of Christian prudence, for the child of God, when he finds his heart not so affected as he would have it for spiritual mercies, to make an errand to God of a temporal mercy, whereby his heart may be the more fitted for asking spiritual blessings; as we have

have instances often in the Psalms, and also in the famous wrestling of Jacob. Only,

(1.) Pray for temporal mercies for the sake of spiritual, not contrariwise, Matth. vi. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Prov. xxx. 8. 9. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal; and take the name of my God in vain.*

(2.) Keep within the bounds of the promise. Now, all promises of temporal things have this condition, if they be for God's glory and his childrens good. Pray so, as you may be content to want them, if God see it meet. But as for grace, the favour of God, and communion with him here and hereafter, it can never be our duty to be content to want them, 1 Thess. iv. 3. *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.*

Fourthly, In whose name are we to pray? In the name of Christ, John xiv. 13. 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* This is to plead the merits of Jesus Christ. We must come to God in the name of Christ, laying all the stress upon his merits. All things go by favour in the court of heaven; the Father hears us for the Son's sake. This implies that we must be in Christ, before we can pray acceptably. But I shall consider this particular more fully, when I come, in course, to speak of praying in the name of Christ.

Fifthly, There are several kinds of prayer. I shall speak a word to these three, *ejaculatory, secret, and family.*

1. *Ejaculatory* prayer, which is a sudden dispatch of the desires of the soul to heaven, upon any emergent occasion; sometimes with the voice, and sometimes without it. I will say of it,

(1.) It

(1.) It has been the practice of the saints. Thus Jacob, when making his testament, says, Gen. xlix. 18. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* And when giving charge to his sons concerning Benjamin, chap. xlivi. 14. *God Almighty give you mercy before the man, &c.* Moses, when brought into a great strait at the approach of the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 15. *The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.* David, when told of Ahithophel's being among the conspirators with Absalom, says, 2 Sam. xv. 31. *O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.* And Nehemiah, when in the king's presence, and asked by him his request, says, chap. ii. 4. *I prayed to the God of heaven.*

(2.) Such prayers are very necessary. Light and strength for duty, against temptation, &c. are often needed, when we cannot get to our knees.

(3.) They are very useful for present help, and are notable means to keep the soul habitually heavenly and in a proper frame, when we make more solemn approaches to God.

(4.) It is no small mercy, that God's door stands always open, and that our prayers may be at heaven, before we can be at a secret place.

2. *Secret prayer*, wherein the man or woman goes alone to a secret place, and they pour out their souls before the Lord.

(1.) It is commanded expressly by our Lord, Matth. vi. 6. *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.*

(2.) They will have much ado to evidence their sincerity, whose prayers are all before men, Matth. vi. 5. 6. *When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men, &c.* A hypocrite may pray in secret; but a sincere soul will be loath to neglect it.

(3.) As

(3.) As no man knows our case so well as ourselves, so it is a sign of little acquaintance with our own hearts, if we have not something to tell Christ, which we cannot tell before others, Cant. vii. 11. 12. *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field : let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth : there will I give thee my loves.*

(4.) The greatest enjoyments of the people of God have been in secret prayer ; as in the case of Jacob, Daniel, &c.

3. *Family-prayer.* God must be worshipped in our families, as well as in our closets.

(1.) God commands it, in so far as he requires every kind of prayer, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer.* The scripture speaks of a church in Aquila's house, Rom. xvi. 5. Surely the family was not such a one that shut God out of doors. The family sacrifice was God's ordinance, Exod. xii. 21. *Draw out, and take you a lamb, according to your families, and kill the passover.*

(2.) It was the practice of Christ, Matth. xxvi. 30. John xvii. and of the saints, as Job, chap. i. 5. Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15. and Cornelius, Acts x. 2. Elisha prayed with his servant, 2 Kings iv. 33.

(3.) The master of the family has the charge of the souls under his roof ; and surely the case of a family requires family-prayer. Are there not family wants, sins, and mercies, that require such an exercise ?

O what a heavy vengeance abides families that are without the worship of God ! Jer. x. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.* That house that is not sanctified by prayer, is like to be the house of the wicked, where God's curse is. How will ye answer for the souls committed to your charge, who do not pray in your families ? No wonder godly persons should scarce at your family ; though indeed it is to be

be lamented, that many professors like Jonah will flee from the presence of the Lord, out of a praying family to a prayerless one; whom a storm sometimes pursues.

Before proceeding to the other head, the manner of praying, permit me to make a very brief improvement of what has been said.

1. Let me address myself to those that live in the total neglect of this duty of prayer. O repent and amend, and set about this necessary duty. Consider,

(1.) A prayerless person is a graceless person, in a state of wrath, in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. No sooner is Paul converted, but *behold he prayeth*. Still-born children cannot be heirs. The Spirit of grace is the Spirit of supplication. The Spirit makes us to cry, *Abba, Father*.

(2.) A prayerless person is a thief and a robber of what he possesses in the world. How darest thou use God's creatures, and not ask his leave? 1 Tim. iv. 4. 5. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* Surely, thou prayerless one, a curse is on thy house, thy basket, and thy store. But alas! many live like swine; they never look up to heaven, nor cry till the knife of death be at their throat.

(3.) It is a privilege that God will allow us to come so near him, and to pour out our hearts before him, a privilege bought by the blood of Christ. The prayerless person undervalues this rich privilege, trampling on that blood that bought it, which will be a worm in his conscience in hell that will gnaw it for ever.

(4.) Thy soul lies at stake. That dumb devil that possesses thee, must be cast out of thee, or thou art undone for ever. Thou art lost by nature; wilt thou not cry for the life of thy poor soul? God says to thee, as Pilate to Christ, John xix. 10. *Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not, that I have power to damn thee, and have power to save thee?* Thou canst

not be saved without calling on the Lord by prayer.

But perhaps one may say, I will pray on a death-bed. *Answ.* What if God cut thee off in a moment? what if thou die in the rage of a fever? how knowest thou that God will then hear thee? Ponder and seriously consider what the Lord says, Prov. i. 24.—31. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* And remember that such a conduct will bring you to that miserable pass described, Is. viii. 21. 22. *And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth: and behold, trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness;*

Another may say, I cannot pray. *Answ.* Will you try, for God calls thee; thou mayst expect assistance, Exod. iv. 11. *Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?* Seriously consider thy state and sins, and thou shalt have matter for confession; consider thy mercies, and thou shalt have matter for thanksgiving; consider thy wants, and thou shalt have matter for petition. Though thou canst not express thyself as some others, yet be sincere. Parents love to hear their babes that are learning to speak; and God will never refuse to hear the sincere language of

of a heart, though it is not expressed in the most proper words.

2. To praying persons I would say, Continue constantly in this duty of prayer, and never give it over as long as you live. Consider,

(1.) Your need, wants, temptations, snares, &c. never cease, nor will cease while ye are here; and why should ye cease to pray? God will have his people live from hand to mouth, because he loves to have them always about his hand.

(2.) Praying is a soul-enriching trade. It is a trade with heaven, and brings down temporal and spiritual mercies. He that drives this trade most diligently, will be found the most thriving Christian. Surely the leanness among professors is owing to this neglect in a great measure.

(3.) If ever a time called for prayer, this time does, while the ark of God is in hazard, and damnable errors are spreading. O then pray, and pray frequently, and ere long your prayers shall be turned to praises.

II. I proceed to consider the manner of praying, or to shew, in what respects we are to *pray without ceasing*. This is not to be understood as if we should spend our whole time in the exercise of prayer: for there are many other duties, both of our station in life and as Christians, that we are bound to perform; and these must have their time; and God does not bind us to inconsistencies. But we must,

1. Pray frequently, as David did, Psal. cxix. 164. *Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgements.* The Christian should be no stranger to, but often at that work. It is a piece of walking with God, wherein the soul seeks communion with Heaven, and wherein he should abound, Col. ii. 6. 7. We find Daniel frequently at it, when it was death to pray, Dan. vi. 10. See Psal. lv. 17. *Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.* Hereby may

be known what case the soul is in; the more diligent one is in this duty, he will be the more thriving.

2. Pray *statedly*, without ceasing from the set times of prayer. These are evening and morning. The morning and evening sacrifice were called *the continual burnt-offering*, Exod. xxix. 39. 41. 42. as being offered continually at these times. And these times were the times of prayer, Acts iii. 1. The light of nature itself teaches us to begin and end the day with the worship of God. And they should be reckoned lost days that are not so begun and ended.

3. Pray *occasionally*, without ceasing from embracing occasions of praying which the Lord puts in your hand. Do as David did, Psal. xxvii. 8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* An observing Christian will sometimes find himself called to pray between hands; and it is dangerous to sit the motion of an occasional tryst that God sometimes sets a person. To such a tryst there concurs, (1.) An inward moving of the soul to converse with God by prayer, Psal. xxvii. 8. just cited; the Spirit of the Lord exciting to duty, by representing a particular need, or fit occasion of converse with God, and so pressing a man forward to the throne to supplicate. (2.) A fair opportunity for it, Gal. vi. 10. And forasmuch as there may be motions to prayer, that are not from the Spirit of God, they may thus be discerned by the unseasonableness of them; for the Spirit of God puts people to duty seasonably, Psal. i. 3.

4. Pray *constantly*, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.* There must be a persevering in this duty, in the several kinds thereof, as the Lord gives opportunity. And this imports a continuing the course of praying, never giving up with it while breath remains, nor giving it over for a time, Psal. cxix. 112. The latter makes way for the former, as swooning does for dying for good and all.

5. Pray *importunately*, not fainting nor giving over your tabled petitions as long as your needs remain, but resolutely pursuing them before the throne; Luke xviii. 1. *And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Pray till ye get the answer of your prayers, if it should be never so long delayed. God loves to have such petitioners about him, as are resolute, and will not take a nay-say, as in the woman of Canaan's case, Matth. xv. 22.—28.

6. Be *habitual* in the use of ejaculatory prayer; for this is a kind of prayer that can be mixed with whatever other good thing ye are about. There is an occasion for lifting up the heart to the Lord in an ejaculatory petition, in every busines that is lawful, and in every company; and there is always an opportunity for it too. All our actions should be fashioned with it.

7. *Lastly*, Keep your hearts always in a *praying frame*; that whenever God calls you, you may be ready as the soldier at the sound of the trumpet, Eph. vi. 18. Hereto two things are necessary. (1.) That ye keep a clean conscience, watching against sin, haying habitually recourse to the blood of sprinkling, Heb. ix. 14. (2.) That ye use moderation in all things, Phil. iv. 5. That joy or sorrow, eating or drinking, working or diversion, that unsuits a man for prayer, is too much; for glorifying God is our chief end, to which all other ends must be subordinated, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

USE I. Of reproof to those that being come to years of discretion,

1. Have not yet begun to pray; but live like beasts, eating, working, or playing, and sleeping, but have not begun to pray to the God that made them. Ah! know ye not that ye must die, and live eternally in another world? that ye are criminals, and have

forfeited your life by your sin? that ye must be pardoned, or perish? And ye that have not set up God's worship in your families, will ye not give God house-room with you? Know your danger, and flee from the fury which the Lord will pour out on those who call not on his name.

2. Those that have left off praying. Sometimes they have prayed, but have given it over now; some in secret, and some in their families. Remember that this makes you apostates, and that apostasy is very dangerous. Consider the two following scripture-passages, 2 Pet. ii. 21. *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

3. Those that pray now and then only, as it suits with their conveniency. Some will pray on the Sabbath-day, when they have no other thing to do. Sometimes they are in a good mood, and take a start of praying; at other times they will rise from bed, and go to it, without ever bowing a knee to God. They will pray at even, but not at morn. Some cannot be got to set up the worship of God in their families in the morning, others for several days in a week have no family-worship, sometimes in the year in the throng of busines. Let conscience say, if that be *praying without ceasing*. Is it not a contempt of God in his worship, and like the hypocrite, Job xxvii. 10. of whom it is said, *Will he always call upon God?*

USE II. Pray without, ceasing. For, (1.) Satan never ceases to seek your destruction, 1 Pet. v. 8. (2.) Your need of the Lord's help never ceaseth: ye need direction, protection, life, strength, mercies of all kinds, spiritual and temporal. (3.) Lastly, Time never ceases to run, and ye know not when it may run out. There is good reason we pray always, since we know no time wherein death may not overtake us.

Of the Spirit's Help in Prayer.

Several Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1727.

R O M A N S viii. 26.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Somewhat of the nature of prayer in general, with the import of praying without ceasing, has been explained to you, but it is not every kind of prayer that is acceptable to God. Among praying people there is a twofold cry that goes to heaven, (1.) The cry of strangers, not known and approved there. That is prayer wrought out by ourselves, in virtue of a natural sense of want, by a gift of knowledge and utterance. (2.) The cry of children ; that is prayer wrought in us by the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling and acting in us, and is accepted of God. Of this our text speaks. In which,

1. The connection is to be noticed, *likewise*. This chapter is an inventory of the privileges of believers. (1.) Freedom from condemnation, ver. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* (2.) Sanctification, ver. 5. *They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit.* (3.) Comfort against death, ver. 10. *If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin ; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.* (4.) Sonship to God, ver. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* (5.) Glorification abiding them, ver. 18. *For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time, are*

not

not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. From this high privilege the apostle looks down on the cross and afflictions here laid on believers, and shews there is no comparison betwixt these afflictions and that glory, they being but like a prick with a pin received by one in his way to a crown. And this is a first grand consolation against the cross laid on believers. (6.) The help of the Spirit for the present, in the text. And this is the second grand consolation of believers under the cross. They have not only, under all their afflictions, eternal glory made sure to them in end; but for the present time, while they are going under their burden, they have the Spirit of the Lord helping them, and particularly in prayer, the noted relief of the distressed, *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, &c.* And that is a great consolation under the cross.

2. The words themselves, in which we may observe two things.

¶, A general assertion of the Spirit's assisting of believers in the midst of their infirmities. And here, (1.) There is something supposed; namely, That they are compassed with infirmities while here. They are recovered of their deadly sickness of sin, but they are still weak; they are restored to life, but they have as yet little strength, and are much bowed down with pressures on them. (2.) Something expressed, namely, the Spirit's helping of them in that case. Weak people need help, especially under heavy burdens. And believers want not help under theirs; they have the best of help, the help of God himself, the eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son, the third person of the glorious Trinity, by whom the Father and the Son do act in them. He *helps our infirmities, i. e.* helps us in our infirmities, to whatsoever we have to do or bear.

This help of the Spirit is a joint action, as the word imports. *q. d.* He together over-against takes a list of our burden. Where the Spirit helps, the man

man is not idle : but while the believer is going under his burden, he lifts the heavy end of it, and makes it the lighter to us : he does as the nurse with the child learning to go ; the child moves his feet, but she holds him up and helps him, holding it by the arms.

2dly, A particular condescension, namely, his helping them in prayer, which brings great relief under the cross. And here,

(1.) We have a general infirmity that believers labour under, and that is little skill of praying. Whenever the grace of God touches their hearts, they are set a-praying : however, they are in it but like bears, beginning to speak ; while unbelievers mean-while are but like dumb people making a roar. Their weakness and unskilfulness in praying lies in two things.

[1.] In the matter of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for.* We are apt instead of bread to ask a stone, instead of a fish a scorpion ; to pray for what would do us ill, and against what is for our good.

[2.] In the manner of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for AS WE OUGHT.* We cannot put our prayers in right shape, even when we are right as to the matter of them. We cannot put our petitions in form, in the style of the court of heaven.

(2.) The Spirit's help afforded them in this case : But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, &c. Where we may notice,

[1.] The agent in this help, *the Spirit itself*, rather *the Spirit himself* : the meaning certainly is so, for the Spirit here spoken of is a person, not a thing ; though, by reason of the language the apostle wrote in, it is expressed neutrally.

[2.] The help itself, He *maketh intercession for us.* Christ intercedes for us in heaven ; the Spirit intercedes in us, by his effectual working in us, helping us to pray aright, and make intercession for ourselves. He forms our petitions for the court of heaven. No gifts

gifts could avail to this end. If the best gift without the Spirit were bestowed on a man, he could not make a prayer that would be acceptable to God, though it might be much admired of men.

[3.] An instance of a particular, whereto the Spirit helps in prayer, *with groanings*. Not that the Spirit's help in prayer appears in these only: but that even these groanings for divine aid, which believers have in their prayer, though they may be reckoned small things; yet are really great and prevalent with God, as proceeding from and produced in them by his own Spirit; and they are more forcible and expressive of the desires of the soul than any words; so they are *groanings which cannot be uttered*. It is evident, that the Spirit of God in himself doth not groan; but groanings are attributed to him, so far as he causes us to groan, by exciting our affections. Therefore his intercession is to be understood of his causing and helping us to intercede in prayer for ourselves.

The following doctrines may be observed from the words thus explained.

DOCT. I. *It is a comfortable case under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden.*

DOCT. II. *It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compassed while here.*

DOCT. III. *Such is the weakness of God's own children, that they have not skill to manage even their addresses to God by prayer aright, without the Spirit.*

DOCT. IV. *All our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work, his making intercession for us.*

DOCT. V. ult. *The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly causing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.*

DOCT. I.

DOCTR. I. It is a comfortable case under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden. This doctrine arises from the connection and scope of the words.

In discoursing from it, I shall consider,

I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden.

II. The comfort that is in this case.

III. Make improvement.

I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden. I take it up in these two particulars.

1. Help to lay the case before the Lord, and to table petitions before the throne of grace, upon the case. If any are thus helped, it is a token for good, they may take comfort of it, Psal. lxvi. 16. 17. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.* Little do we know how to table petitions on our case at the court of heaven : but if a shower of trouble should fall on us, and withal the Spirit of prayer be poured on us, we would have no cause to complain. Though the Lord press down a person with the one hand, and stir him up to the exercise of prayer with the other, it is a hopeful case, as was that of Jonah, chap. ii. 1.

2. Help to insist and resolutely to hang on and not faint, however longsome the hearing may be, Col. i. 11. Thus the Spirit helps the children of God in prayer, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me : and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* The patience of others in applications to the throne of grace will soon be tired out ; they cannot wait : so they drop the matter, Job xxvii. 10. and go to another door. But those in whom

whom the Spirit dwells, see no other door, John vi. 68. and the Spirit is a spring of living water in them, which causes them to hold on.

II. What is the comfort that is in this case. It is manifold. I instance in the following particulars.

1. That is comfortable in it, that the native effect of affliction is stopt in such a person, by influence from heaven. Affliction in its own nature is a whip, a brier, a thorn: and the native effect of it is, to drive the sinner away from God, to harden his heart, irritate his corruption, and make his heart a hell, Job xxxvi. 13. *The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them.* But, by divine institution, it is a medicine, having a promise annexed to it, Is. xxvi. 9. *When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness:* and so it brings the believing sinner to God, as the bitter potion causes the sick man turn to his physician, who would all he could keep himself out of the way of an enemy that had given him such a bitter draught, Rom. x. 14.

2. It is comfortable, even that the party gets a vent to his full heart. Those in a trouble find a kind of relief in pouring out their heart into the bosom of a sympathizing friend; and it is an aggravation of affliction, when the fire must burn in the bosom, and there is no access to give it a vent. How much more is it a solid comfort, to be helped to pour out one's heart unto a gracious God, able and willing to help in due time? Micah resolved to take comfort this way, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* And Hannah got it, 1 Sam. i. 15. 16. *And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint*
and

and grief have I spoken hitherto. Ver. 18. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

3. It is comfortable, that the Lord takes that way to draw the sinner to him, and keep him about his hand, and it is effectual, Hos. v. ult. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* We reckon in the world, that they are in the best case that hold all within themselves: but in respect of spiritual thriving, they are fairest for that who are kept from hand to mouth, and never want a new errand to God's door. The Lord loves to have his children always about his hand; but they would be like bears at their play about meal-time, that would never mind home, if hunger did not bite them; and so in effect it fares with many.

4. That is comfortable in it, that it is a sign of eternal good-will and everlasting love to such persons, Luke xviii. 7. *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* They would be tired out, if they were not God's chosen, possessed by his Spirit. Do ye see a place which is always full of water, summer and winter, in the greatest drought? ye may be sure that is no pool, but a spring, John iv. 14. The man prays and wrestles against a body of death, cries and goes on under a weight of trials: he holds on notwithstanding of seeming fruitlessness. See the verdict, Matth. xxiv. 13. *He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

5. That is comfortable in it, that his prayers shall be heard at length to his heart's content, if it should not be till he get into heaven, Luke xviii. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.* The help of the Spirit in prayer is a certain pledge of the hearing of prayer, Jam. v. 18. If a poor man were to petition the king, but had no skill to draw his petition;

and the king should send one from about his hand to help that poor man, and draw his petition for him; would not that be a sign that the king had a good mind to grant it? So it is equally a certain sign of God's good-will to the praying person, and a certain token that his prayers shall be heard to his full satisfaction at length, that the Spirit now helps him in prayer, and as it were draws his petitions for him.

6. It is comfortable, that the party is now and then getting some offallings about the Lord's hand; otherwise he would give over. In the way of duty, wherein people are not formal, but truly serious, there is a concomitant reward, Psal. xix. 11. *In keeping of them there is great reward;* and particularly in prayer, Is. xlvi. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* Though the Lord does not give the main request for the time, yet he gives something that keeps the heart from fainting, Lam. iii. 57. *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.* So we find it happened to Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* And he said unto me, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

From what is said on this doctrine, the following things may be shortly observed for improvement.

1. The Lord's cross on his people's back, is better than the world's crown on the head of his enemies. For there is more comfort in the one's being helped from heaven to commit their case to the Lord, and depend on him for it, than in all the prosperity of the wicked. For all is well that ends well; and the former will have a joyful end, the latter a sad one, Prov. i. 32. 33.

2. They are doubly to be pitied, who are under an afflicted lot, and withal strangers to the duty and comfort

comfort of prayer. This world is a place wherein neither good nor bad will miss their share of crosses. But to see this world frowning on a man, and in the mean time him not seeking his comfort from heaven: to see a person full of matter of complaints, and yet having no heart to pour them out into the bosom of our heavenly Father, is a sad sight.

3. Let praying people beware of afflictions deadening them, and taking heart and hand from them in prayer. Satan will do his utmost, to work up afflictions to this pitch; and when he has got it done, he has what he would wish, he has an invenomed arrow sticking in their flesh. Let them haste to get it away, as ever they would cast a coal of hell out of their bosom; and remember that *God is love*; and *he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*, 1 John iv. 16.; that the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, Lam. iii. 33.; and that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28.

4. Lastly, Let those who are helped to pray under their affliction, be thankful, and acknowledge God has not forgotten them. When the Lord's people have plied the throne of grace long for a mercy, and yet it comes not, they are ready to think that the Lord regards them not. But if ye be helped still to hang on, that very thing is an evidence that is not true; and it is a token for good in your case.

DOCT. II. *It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compassed while here.*

Here I shall shew,

I. What are the infirmities believers are compassed with here.

II. Why in the depth of sovereign wisdom, be-

lievers are left compassed so with infirmities while here.

III. Consider the Spirit's helping believers under these infirmities.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what are the infirmities believers are compassed with here.

First, They are always compassed with *natural* infirmities.

1. *Pure* natural infirmities, which though they be their weights and burdens, yet are not their sins. There is a natural weakness inwrought with human flesh, though at its prime of vigour, Is. xl. 6. so that it was found even in the man Christ, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. This makes God's children objects of their Father's pity, Psal. ciii. 13. 14. *Like as a father pitied his children: so the Lord pitied them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.* Such are the need of meat, drink, sleep, &c. whereby the tabernacle must be daily underpropped, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even Samson was sore pressed with such infirmity, Judg. xv. 18. *He was sore a-thirst.*

2. *Sinful* natural infirmities, which are both pressures on them, and defilements of them, wounding and polluting.

(1.) *Common* to them all, namely, the remains of the corruption of nature, which makes them all a company of poor weaklings, groaning under their infirmities, Rom. vii. 24. Their sanctification is imperfect; every grace in them has the contrary weed of corruption growing by the side of it. Grace indeed has got the house, but dwells not alone in it; the Canaanites are left in the land, and they cannot quite drive them out. Hence is the struggle not only with those without, but those within.

(2.) *Peculiar* to every one of them, namely, the particular bias of corrupt nature in each of them, a-

rising

rising from their natural constitution and temper ; and this is a cast of disposition to some particular evil, commonly called *the predominant sin, the sin which doth so easily beset us*, Heb. xii. 1. Thus the peculiar infirmity of some is passion, of others vanity, worldliness, &c. Every one will know their own ; for it will be that which costs more struggle than any thing else, and in which they will find need of the peculiar help of the Spirit.

Secondly, They are often compassed with *accidental infirmities*.

1. *Sinless ones.* Such are afflictions, trials, and temptations, which though not their sins, yet are heavy weights to them, causing them much need of help, as in Paul's case, 2 Cor. xii. 7. 8. 9. Thus diseases and ailments of whatsoever nature go under the name of *infirmities*, as weakening body or spirit, Luke v. 15. Timothy had frequent attacks by them, 1 Tim. v. 23. And in the road to heaven, such weights and pressures one way or other will not be missed, Acts xiv. 22.

2. *Sinful ones*, being wrong casts of spirit, arising from education or other circumstances, giving them as it were a second nature. Such was the infirmity of the disciples, whereby they were ready on all occasions to mind a temporal kingdom of Christ, and to be stumbled at his sufferings ; and the bias towards the ceremonial law, which the believing Jews had remaining with them, Rom. xv. 1.

Hence the infirmities of believers may be taken up in the following particulars.

1. They have *weak heads*, for discerning and understanding sin and duty, snares, temptations, and proper means for eviting the one, and compassing the other, Jer. x. 23. *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* The subtle enemy is ready to outwit them, and by his devices to triumph over their weakness. Therefore we are warned not to trust our own understanding, Prov. iii. 5.

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2. They

2. They have *weak hearts* for venturing on difficulties, which make them ready to faint at the appearance of them, If. xxxv. 4. And the formidable enemy is ready to damp them, and discourage them. They know themselves, how little strength they have; and their faith being weak withal, they are apt to sink in their courage for doing and suffering.

3. They have *weak hands* for doing of duties in the right manner, If. xxxv. 3. They are not in themselves man enough for the most ordinary duties of religion; and therefore being left to themselves, they quite mismanage them, John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5. And sometimes the Lord calls them to extraordinary duties.

4. *Lastly*, They have *weak backs* for bearing of burdens, so that they are easily bowed down, yea and foundered under them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Their suffering strength is small, considering the weak frame of their bodies, and the remaining distempers in their souls.

II. I come now to shew why, in the depth of sovereign wisdom, believers are left compassed with infirmities while here. Surely it is not for want of power in their Father to deliver them: for he is almighty, and in the moment he gave them grace, could have perfected them in soul and body. Neither is it for want of love to and concern for them; for he has the bowels of a Father, and gave them his own Son, which was more than all that. But so it is ordered,

1. That the members may be conformed to the head, Rom. viii. 29. Our Lord Jesus did not enter to his glory, but after a long track of sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. This was necessary in the case of Christ the head, for the purchasing of our salvation, Matth. viii. 17. Luke xxiv. 26. And it is necessary in the case of believers, that they may be conformed to him, bearing the image of his sufferings, for his glory.

2. That

2. That the emptiness of the creature may be discovered, and the pride of all created glory stained, and that the crown may be put on the head of free grace only; so that we may say, *The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth,* If. xxiii. 9. Therein a scene is opened, wherein there is a full display of the nothingness of the creature, that heaven may appear to be peopled with those that could have no pretensions to it, but on the score of mere free grace.

3. That all the graces of the Spirit in believers may be brought forth into the field of battle, and exert themselves, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. There are some graces whose exercise is to be eternal, as love, reverential fear, &c. these will be exerted in heaven as well as here. But there are others that are occasional in their exercise, such as faith, hope, patience, watchfulness, &c. which agree only to a state of imperfection: and there they have occasion to shew themselves. So, for the exercise of these, and trial of both sorts, the Canaanites are left in the land. And therefore some are loaded with peculiar infirmities.

4. That the power of the grace of Christ may be magnified. The infirmities wherewith believers are compassed, make a scene wherein the power of Christ is signally displayed, as says the apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* God could have seated Israel in Canaan, without stroke of sword: but then Joshua's valour, which appeared in the conquest of that land, had lain hid. Believers are committed unto Christ's hand, as the great Pilot, to guide them through the sea of this world, to the shore of Immanuel's land: and it will magnify the power of his grace, that by his conduct so many broken ships are brought safe ashore, through so many rocks and shelves, and suffering so many storms.

5. That

5. That the bruised serpent may be beat the more shamefully, and Christ's victory and triumph over him may be the more signal. He encountered Christ in person on the cross: and there he was overcome, the Son of God being an over-match for all the power of hell. But that his defeat may be more shameful, he is yoked with poor believers with a heap of infirmities about them; and by them too, after he has done his worst, he is baffled at length, Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

And here it is worth observing, that our Lord Jesus singles out some of his people to combat with Satan, loaded with some uncommon infirmity, whereby he has a peculiar advantage against them, that he has not against others: and all to make that malicious spirit's defeat yet more shameful. As if one, to pour contempt on his enemy, should say, I will take such an one of my children that are not quite recovered out of their sickness, and I will bind one of his arms behind his back, and yet make him throw you down, and tread on you. Thus Job was stript of all his comforts, his children, wealth, and health; nothing left him but his life, and his unkind wife that Satan had use for: and Satan makes a furious attack on him to blaspheme, when he had him at all this disadvantage. And yet he was baffled in end, Jam. v. 11. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* And when the gospel was to be spread in the world, Satan had the power of the sword and the learning in the world engaged in the defence of his kingdom: and Christ singles out a few fishermen, neither swordsmen nor bookmen, Paul excepted, and they pull it down; notwithstanding all the magistrates could do by their force, and the learned by their subtlety, to support it.

6. *Lastly,* To screw up the glory of the exceeding riches of grace to a height, Eph. ii. 7. *That in the*

ages

ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. According to this dispensation, believers are drowned deeper in the debt of free grace, than otherwise they would have been, Rom. v. 20. By these infirmities wherewith they are compassed, it comes to pass that their accounts of pardoning and supporting grace are swelled with many items: the view of which will make them sing the praises of God in heaven, on a higher key than innocent Adam would have done.

III. We shall consider the Spirit's helping believers under those infirmities they are compassed with. And here I shall shew,

1. The import of this.
2. How the Spirit helps them under their infirmities.

First, I am to shew the import of the Spirit's helping believers under their infirmities. It imports in it,

1. A bent of heart in the believer toward his work and duty, set him by the great Master, Rom. vii. 22. for what people have no mind to, they need no help for. The heart of every child of God is reconciled to the whole law, Heb. viii. 10. And what God carves out for him either to do or suffer, he would fain come up to, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even when there is a felt averseness to it, this bent in the renewed part remains with him, to which that averseness is a burden, Rom. vii. 22. 23.

2. The infirmities hanging about the believer, make duty difficult to him: if it were not so, what need would he have of help? Matth. xxvi. 40. 41. These hang like weights on him, and draw him down, when he would mount upwards: so his executive powers cannot answer his will. He is at best like a bird flying with a stone tied to its foot; whereby it comes to pass, that it cannot fly far till it light, and the short way it flies is with difficulty.

3. The

3. The believer is sensible of his infirmities, for it is supposed that he is wrestling under them, Rom. vii. 23. 24. He sees, he feels, that he is not man enough for his work; that his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor his own back for his burden; this is what drives him out of himself to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And thus he lies open to the help of the Spirit, while proud nature in unbelievers is left helpless, 1 Pet. v. 5. *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* Is. xl. 4. *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.*

4. The believer aims at and attempts to do his duty, over the belly of his infirmities. For helping is a joint action, Phil. iii. 14. *I press toward the mark.* Many feel a difficulty in the weightiest parts of religion, that makes them at length to give them over. They neither have ability in themselves to master such a lust, nor have the grace to betake themselves to Christ for the help of his Spirit. But they fit down contented under it, soothing themselves with this, that every one has his infirmity, and that is theirs; and so they discover their hypocrisy. But real saints wrestle with their infirmities, fit not down, but go on though they go halting.

5. *Lastly,* The Spirit of the Lord comes in to the believer's help in this case, so as the work and duty is got done. *For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.* As the nurse helps the child attempting to go, or one helps a man attempting to lift up a weighty burden: so the Spirit helps the weak believer essaying his duty, to perform it. He stretches out the withered hand, and with the aiming to stretch it out, power is sent in from above.

Secondly, I am next to shew how the Spirit helps believers under their infirmities.

1. He helps them by his influence in gifts. Here he does two things.

1st, He bestows on them gifts necessary for the performance

performance of what the Lord calls them to, of whatever nature that be, temporal or spiritual, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. —11. *To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.* But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. The gifts of believers are various, according to the variety of their stations in life, and the respective particular duties required of them in their stations. Every one has not all, nor will ever have all; because there are many of them which they have no necessity for, in respect of what God calls them to. But there are two things I would have you advert to.

(1.) Whatever good gift a child of God has, he will get use for it, for God, soon or late, 1 Cor. xii. 7. though for a time he may have little or none for it. For in that case the Spirit lays in beforehand for their help. David had the gift of music in his younger years; the use of it for God appeared afterward, when on that account he was sent for to Saul's court, and afterwards he ordered the temple service in that point. Paul had a gift of human learning; he got use for it afterwards, when he fought those at Athens with their own weapons, Acts xvii. 28. Moses had a gift of extraordinary meekness of temper, and Job of extraordinary patience: each got as much ado with them for God.

An unbeliever indeed may have a gift, which he never has any use for, for God. For he always does one of two things with it; either he hides it in the earth, and makes no use of it at all, Matth. xxv. 25. or else he uses it to the service of his own lusts, Jam. iv. 3. 4. But God will not let any good gift in his own people lie by useles.

(2.) Whatever

(2.) Whatever duty, in temporal or spiritual things, God calls a believer to, he will, in a way of believing, get the gift from God necessary for it, Prov. x. 29. *The way of the Lord is strength to the upright : and iii. 6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* For it is the office of the Spirit to help his people's infirmities. And so a call from the Lord to any piece of work, imports a promise of a gift of ability for it, the sap of which promise is to be sucked by believing it: and it is withal a call to look to the Lord for the help of his Spirit. For the Lord treats not his children as the Egyptian task-masters did, who would have the Israelites make brick without giving them straw. Moses is called to go JEHOVAH's ambassador to the court of Egypt: he is sensible of an infirmity, but the Spirit's help is secured to him, Exod. iv. 10. 12. Bezaleel and Aholiab must work the curious work of the tabernacle. Where should they have learned it, when they were slaves in Egypt at the brick-kilns? But the Spirit helps their infirmity, bestowing on them necessary gifts, Exod. xxxi. 2. &c.

But in case the believer do not go to God for the gift, in the way of believing, no wonder he want it. For is it any thing strange that the help of the Spirit is not given a man, in a particular, wherein he does not look for it? as he is commanded to do, Prov. iii. 6.

2dly, He influences them to the exercise of these gifts, Matth. x. 19. 20. *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* As every good gift is from the Spirit, so the same Spirit has not given them away so to any, but that he has still lock and key on them, opening them out, and shutting them up as he will, If. xxix. 14. Therefore there ought to be dependence on the Lord, for the help of his Spirit to the exercise of any gift necessary for what the Lord calls

calls one to. That unbelievers have a common influence of the Spirit, in the way of common providence, to the exercise of their gifts, though they look not to the hand it comes from, is for the benefit of human society: but even the Spirit's influence on gifts, coming to believers in the channel of the covenant, their blunders and mismanagements in the exercise of their gifts, are rebukes to them for their not looking more to the help of the Spirit therein, and to bring them to their duty.

2. He helps them by his influence in grace. Here he helps their infirmities three ways.

1st, He preserves the grace he has planted in believers, so as it never dies out, 1 John ii. 27. *The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie: and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* The quickening Spirit of Christ being communicated to the dead elect in the time of loves, they are made to live and believe in Christ, and so are united to him: upon which union the same Spirit takes of the treasure of grace in Christ, and plants in the believer grace for grace in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 13. with John i. 16. And this for all time after he preserves, 2 Tim. i. 14. *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.* John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Deut. xxxiii. 3. *All his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words,* i.e. thy Spirit. Luke xi. 20. with Matth. xii. 28. Now, this is a great helping of their infirmities, if ye consider jointly these four things.

(1.) That holy quality called *grace*, is in its own nature a thing liable to be lost. Adam at his creation was endowed with a far greater measure of it than any believer has in this world: yet that holy

fire in him was quite extinguished ; that heavenly plant, by one bite of the venomous teeth of the old serpent, died out quite, and withered away. How then is it preserved in believers compassed with infirmities, but by the help of the Spirit ? Free-will in Adam lost it, but the free grace of the free Spirit preserves it in weak ones of his family.

(2.) It dwells with an ill neighbour, even the corruption of nature, that is quite opposite to it. The old man of sin had the first possession, the new man of grace is brought in upon him, and meets with a continual resistance ; yet is preserved. There is the weight of a body of sin and death pressing grace in the believer, yet is it not crushed to death. Who looks into his own heart, and sees what powerful lusts are there, must needs wonder to see the pearl kept in such a dung-hill, and the spark of holy fire kept in the midst of an ocean of corruption ; and must own it to be entirely owing to the help of the Spirit, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

(3.) The whole force of hell is bent for its extinction, 1 Pet. v. 8. *Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.* The image of God repaired in a believer, though but in part, is an eye-sore to Satan, he cannot endure to look at it. Therefore he uses all his subtlety, power, and unwearied diligence to raze it. He works against it incessantly, turns himself into all shapes that he may overturn it ; employs his friends within, and his friends without, to the same purpose ; yet it is preserved. How ? but by the help of the Spirit, 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

(4.) Lastly, The believer in himself is but a weak creature ; he has a weak head, heart, hands, and back ;

back; is easily outwitted by a subtle enemy, dis-
couraged, overthrown, and bowed down. Innocent
Adam's strength and ſkill failed in preserving the
grace received in his creation: yet the believer's
grace received in his new creation is never lost;
though of itſelf it is a perishing quality, is furround-
ed with corruption, and the whole force of hell is
employed to extinguish it. For why? the almighty
Spirit helps their infirmitieſ.

2dly, He excites grace in them, and brings it forth
into exercife, Phil. ii. 13. *For it is God which work-
eth in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*
If the exercife of gifts depends on a common opera-
tion of the Spirit, ſurely the exercife of grace on a
ſpecial operation of the fame Spirit. As the fire
buried under the ashes will not ſerve the purpoſes of
the family's provision, nor the tree with its ſap re-
tired into the heart and root bring forth fruit; ſo
grace in the habit only is not sufficient for duty.
The holy fire muſt be blown up, and through the re-
turn of the ſap to the branches, they muſt bud and blos-
ſom. And this is the work of the Spirit, Cant. iv. ult.
*Awake, O north wind, and come, thou ſouth, blow upon
my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out: let my
Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant
fruits.* Now the Spirit excites grace in believers,

(1.) Presenting objects to their minds fit to rouse
it up; and ſo he acts as a teaching Spirit, John xiv.
26. *He ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things
to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſad unto you.*
Corruption thrives moſt in darkness, because it be-
longs to the kingdom of darkness. But light let in-
to the soul ſtirs up grace, therefore it is called *the light
of life*, John viii. 12. Thus the Spirit presenting a
man's ſin to him in its ugly colours, flirs up the grace
of repenitance, Psal. li. 3.; discovering the glory of
God in the face of Jesus Christ, it excites love; and
discovering the creature in its emptineſs, excites con-
tempt of the world. And this is a great help: for,

[1.] We are apt to forget these things, when we have most need to mind them; as to forget human frailty, and divine might, when there is greatest need of confidence in the Lord, against the terror of man; and the Spirit in that case is the believer's remembrancer, and so excites grace, *If. li. 12. 13. I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgottenst the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?* Our weakness in such points makes us need a monitor, being often like Hagar, whose eyes saw not the well, though it was very near by, until God opened them, *Gen. xxi. 19.* So that when such a thing is suggested, one is often made to wonder how they saw it not.

[2.] When we do mind them, we cannot command a lively sight of them, without the blowing of the Spirit, *Hos. viii. 12.* They lie before our eyes as so many dry bones, till the Spirit set them in motion, by setting them in a due light. Joseph's brethren could not forget, that they had been guilty concerning him, nor David that he had sinned in the matter of Uriah: but till the Spirit set these things in another light to them, they were not moved to repent.

(2.) By touching their hearts and affections, and immediately bringing them forth into exercise. Thus the sleeping spouse was awakened, *Cant. v. 4. My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* And so he acts as a quickening Spirit. The hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, to turn them what way he will; and so he moves them by a touch in common things, as he did the band of men that went with Saul to Gibeah, *whose hearts God had touched, 1 Sam. x. 26.*

and

and he also moves them by a touch in gracious actions, as the spouse found, Cant. vi. 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.* As the thaw wind makes the frozen waters to flow amain, and the air in the bellows blows up the fire; so there is an influence of the Spirit on the hearts of believers, opening them in the exercise of grace, Phil. ii. 13. This is a great help to believers: for,

[1.] Their hearts are oft-times very dead within them, when called to duty, either doing or suffering, Cant. v. 2. 3. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* Their affections are flat, and their souls indisposed for spiritual action. But when the Spirit touches their hearts, they are fitted for duty; their spiritual life is brought forth into liveliness and activity, Psal. lxx. 18. *Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*

[2.] They can by no art of theirs remove that their deadness of heart and affections, 2 Cor. iii. 5. but they will lie windbound in the harbour, till the Spirit blow. They may be long toiling in rowing in the use of means, and yet be still but where they were, for all they can do. But the influences of the Spirit rising and filling their sails, they will presently make way, Cant. vi. 12.

Now, this double action of presenting to their minds, and touching their hearts, whereby the Spirit excites grace, is signified to us by comparing the Spirit to fire, which has both light and heat with it, Matth. iii. 11. And there is a twofold mean the Spirit makes use of for that purpose, viz. the word and providence, of which afterwards.

3dly, He strengthens and increases grace in them, Eph. iii. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might,*

by his Spirit in the inner man. Grace is a heavenly seed capable of growth, 2 Pet. iii. ult. and so admits of various degrees of strength, not only in different persons, in respect of which some are little children, others youths, others fathers, 1 John ii. but in the same person at different times, Is. xl. ult. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.* And indeed of its own nature it is a growing thing, as a seed: grace hath a seminal virtue in it, that fits it for growing and receiving more strength, John iv. 14. Mean while the seed will not grow, unless it be watered from above: so grace grows not, but by the influence of the Spirit, Hos. xiv. 5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Now the Spirit doth strengthen and increase grace,

(1.) By frequent exciting it into action. The habits of grace, as well as others, are strengthened by the repeated exercise of them. The more it shines, it shines the brighter, Prov. iv. 18. It is for this cause that God has bound converts also to the hearing of the word, whereby their graces are brought forth into one act after another, as the object is still anew proposed: and for this cause he tryts his people with a variety of incidents, afflictions, and trials, which bring their graces into frequent exercise, whereby at length they become strong.

(2.) By bringing forth into exercise one grace, he strengthens the rest, 2 Pet. i. 5.—8. *And besides this giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.* For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a mason by laying on a next ston in his wall, fastens the rest under it; or the sheaves of corn stand the more firmly, that one is set at the

ſide of another: ſo one grace is ſtill the better of another joined to it in the exercise thereof. So humility strengthens meekneſs and patience, love strengthens obedience in all points, and faith strengthens all together; like a band or key-stone in an arch, the more firm it is, the firmer is the whole arch: ſo the Spirit, by bringing forth one grace in the believer's heart after another, strengthens the whole collection, and makes it the more firm and steady.

(3.) By affording them Christian experiences, whereby they find the truth and reality of what they have believed, and the bleſſed ſenſible advantage of the exercise of grace, Rom. v. 3. 4. 5. *We glory in tribulations alſo, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not abſhamed, because the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* Experienced Christians are therefore always the strongest Christians, even as the ſpoil got in one battle helps the ſoldier to fight the more stoutly in the next, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. 2 Tim. iv. 17. 18. Former experiences are the traveller to Zion's way-marks in dark ſteps, and his cordials in difficult ascents. Every taste of divine goodneſs and grace refreshes and strengthens. Now it is the Spirit that gives these experiences, John xvi. 14. *He ſhall receive of mine, and I will ſhew it unto you.*

(4.) By immediate supplies of grace, Phil. i. 19. *I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* As the lamp is preserved from going out, and is caused to burn more vigorously, by new oil poured in; ſo grace is strengthened by the Spirit giving new supplies thereof, If. xliv. 3. 4. Hence the Spirit is ſaid to build us for an habitation to God, Eph. ii. ult. He works the first grace; and all the intermediate supplies of it, and the perfecting of it, are his, Psal. cxxxviii. ult. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.* Now, this is a great help: for,

[1.] Weighty

[1.] Weighty is the work that lies to the believer's hand; doing work, suffering work. The Christian life is no easy life, however men that go no further than the outside of it, may make it so to themselves. It is a striving, taking by force, running, labouring, fighting, &c. How could it be managed, but that the Spirit helps?

[2.] Great is the opposition that they must work against, Eph. vi. 12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* The wind will be blowing in their face from hell at all times; and sometimes they will meet with violent storms. How could they stand against it, if the Spirit did not help?

[3.] Weak are the hands that work is put into, that has all that opposition. There is a feebleness natural to them, that makes them oft hang down. How could they ever do that work maugre so much opposition, but that the Spirit helps them?

The means which the Spirit of God makes use of to preserve, excite, and strengthen grace in believers, and so to help them, are two.

1. Providences, Psal. xcii. 4. *For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.* The kingdom of providence is put in the hand of the Mediator, for the behoof of the kingdom of grace; and he guides it by his Spirit. The wheels of providence are managed by the Spirit, Ezek. i. 20. and so managed as to help believers in their infirmities. And here two things are especially to be noticed.

(1.) Seasonable turns of the wheel of providence, whereby the believer's wain is often kept up when it is at the oversetting, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Psal. xciv. 18. *When I said, My foot slippeth: thy mercy, O Lord,*
held

held me up. Thus many times the believer is brought to an extremity, as Isaac when the knife was at his throat, when providence seasonably interposes for his relief and outgate, Psal. cxxv. 3.

(2.) Seasonable intermixtures of providence. Thus the Spirit intermixes encouraging dispensations with difficult duties, Judg. vii. 13. 14. merciful incidents with their sharp afflictions; and on the other hand, afflicting incidents with their prosperity: and all that they may neither be swallowed up with adversity, nor destroyed with prosperity.

2. Ordinances, Is. xii. 3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* These are instituted by the King of Zion, for the special means of grace, whereby his Spirit is to work, and to render them effectual. And the experience believers have of the Spirit's helping their infirmities by these, makes them very precious in their sight. And among these there are two especially used for this end.

1st, The sacraments. They are exciting and strengthening ordinances particularly, and consequently preservative of grace. The eunuch's experience witnesseth this as to baptism, Acts viii. 39. *he went on his way rejoicing.* And the Lord's supper is the communion of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 16. which by the Spirit's working, has been to the experience of many a great help.

2dly, The word. This is the most special mean. Providence has its efficacy from the word, and so have the sacraments. It is their continual mean of help, their every-days meal, which they can go to when providence is most louring, and sacramental occasions offer not. And the Spirit uses it for their help three ways.

(1.) Preached, 1 Cor. i. 21. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* This affords to the attentive believer a continued occasion of the exercise of his faith and love, while a variety of

of spiritual truths and objects are represented to him, in their turn; which the Spirit makes use of to draw forth his graces into exercise. Whence believers go away instructed, warmed, strengthened, in a word edified, by reason of so many actings of grace, during their hearing, like the two disciples going to Emmaus, when they said, *Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32.

(2.) Read, 1 Tim. iv. 13. *Till I come, give attendance to reading.* This has the same advantages attending it. Thereby the Spirit of God speaks immediately to the believer by his own word in his own express terms. And the experience of the usefulness of this mean, has made saints prize their Bibles as their life.

(3.) Suggested, John xiv. 26. *He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* The bringing of the word to mind with a man is the office of the Spirit; and by that means he helps believers infirmities, bringing a word suitable to their case, into their remembrance, whether to clear them in doubts, comfort them under pressures, direct them in difficulties, or check them for their debordings, &c. And herein he uses often the very words of the Bible; always what is the sense and doctrine of the Bible. And,

[1.] Sometimes the Spirit barely suggests the word to the mind, without any peculiar light about it, or power impressing it, John xiv. 26. just cited. Thus it is presented as an object for the believer to act faith on, and is a call to look up to the Spirit to enlighten it, and help to believe it, Acts viii. 30. 31. And thus a word at first coming in this way, comes afterwards to be illuminated, by the Spirit's shining on it to the man.

[2.] Sometimes there is a peculiar light and power that comes along with it at the very first, clearly holding out the meaning of it, and impressing it so

on

on their hearts, that they must needs believe and embrace it, John ii. 17. *And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* There were many Old-Testament passages speaking more clearly of Christ, which they understood not: but the Spirit thus suggested this to them.

Meanwhile it is to be observed, that all suggestions of the word are not from the Spirit of God. That Satan may suggest scripture to a man, is evident from Matth. iv. 6. Therefore is that warning, 1 John iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* But the cloven foot may be discerned in such cases two ways.

[1.] They are always of a tendency to drive sinners away from Christ, 1 John iv. 2. 3. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* And they tend to drive out of the road of duty, Matth. iv. 6. *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* This was the design of the testimony he gave to Christ, and to his apostles; while the testimony was indeed true in itself, he gave it maliciously, for an ill end. Therefore mark the tendency of suggestions of the word. Whatever tends to carry off from faith in Christ, or from any point of commanded duty, is not from the Spirit. For his work tends to faith and sanctification. Hence,

[2.] They are always applied by him contrary to their true sense and scope: forasmuch as the Lord's word cannot serve an ill purpose, unless it is wrested: as is evident from what the devil says to Christ, Matth. iv. 6. above cited, compared with Psal. xci. 11. 12. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee*

thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. And therefore the scripture-passage is to be considered, and how it agrees with other scriptures as to the sense and scope in which it is suggested, Matth. iv. 7. *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and leads to the true sense and scope of scripture, John xvi. 13.

I add one observe more on the means, namely, That sometimes the Spirit helps believers infirmities, by a particular providence tryfing the word to their case. This often comes to pass in hearing the word preached, while the word in its ordinary course is brought directly to what is their case in the time; so, that it is like the Midianite's telling his dream, Judg. vii. 13. while Gideon, unknown to him, was overhearing; or they are providentially led to such a place, where such a word suitable to their case is handled, Cant. iii. 3. The same particular providence appears often in the reading of the word, whether at family-worship, or in secret, or by some providential casting of it in one's way *. I think it dangerous to make a fortune-book of the Bible, as some under temptation have opened the Bible, to know their case by the first word that should cast up to them. This is an unwarrantable and dangerous practice, though a merciful God may sometimes condescend to outshoot the devil in his own bow, as in the case of her who threw the glass at the wall, and it broke not. But when people are thus met in the way of their duty, or surprised, with a word suited to their case, the work of the Spirit is to be owned in it, as an accomplishment of the promise, Is. xxx. 21. *Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand,*

* Many instances of this are to be found in the author's own experience, in his Memoirs.

and when ye turn to the left. Certainly the Spirit gives instruction, reproof, invitations, to unbelievers this way ; and much more helps the infirmities of his people the same way : for so the word is in its true use, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.* And this should recommend the reading of the word of God in an ordinary.

I shall now make some short improvement of this doctrine.

USE I. of information. This teaches us and shews,

1. That believers owe their spiritual strength and comfort to the same hand that they owed their spiritual life to. As the mother who brought forth the child nurses it with her own breasts ; so the Spirit, who is to the elect the Spirit of life to quicken them lying dead in sin, is likewise the Comforter to strengthen them under their infirmities when spiritually alive, John vi. 63. & xvi. 13. compare Psal. cxxxviii. ult.

2. The Lord calls none of his people to any duty, but they may get it done acceptably, however difficult it is. For the help of his own Spirit is their allowance, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* Here is the great difference betwixt those under the law and under grace. The law or covenant of works exacts duty rigidly, but affords no help : the covenant of grace affords the promise of help with the command ; for the latter is, but the former is not, *the ministration of the Spirit,* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

3. How that gospel-paradox, 2 Cor. xii. 10. *When I am weak, then am I strong,* is so often verified in the experience of the saints. Many a time when they are strong and well-buckled in all appearance for a work, it miscarries : why, they do not go out of themselves in a way of believing, and so the Spirit withdraws.

withdraws. At other times they see themselves quite out of case and ability to manage such a work, and yet it succeeds : why, the Spirit comes in to their help, while they are sensible of need.

USE II. of reproof. It may reach a reproof,

1. To believers sometimes venturing on duties, more in confidence of their own abilities, than of the Spirit's help, as Peter did when he said, *Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*, Matth. xxvi. 33. This is the cause that the duty is marred ; the bow so bended, cannot miss to break. It is sometimes marred as to the very getting it done, and always as to its acceptance with God.

2. To unbelievers, who neither have the Spirit, nor are careful to have him dwelling in them, and influencing them. Their best works are dead works, having nothing of the quickening and sanctifying Spirit in them ; and they themselves are but natural men spiritually dead, Jude 19. Whatever flourish they make with their gifts in duties, their best duties will no more be accepted of God than carrion, or a beast that died of itself, would have been accepted on the altar.

3. To those who press on men still this and the other duty, without leading them to Jesus Christ for his Spirit and grace. This is *another gospel*, that will never make men holy, Gal. iii. 2. for it is not *the ministration of the Spirit*. And the same veil they cast over the Spirit and grace of Christ, they will always be found to cast over the corruption of man's nature too, that they may with some decency say to every man, *Physician, heal thyself.*

USE III. of exhortation. And, 1. To natural men void of the Spirit. Be concerned to get the Spirit first to quicken you, and then to assist and help you. Ye can do nothing acceptable to God in that state ; and no wonder, for ye have not the gracious help of the Spirit, without which ye can have no access to God, Eph. ii. 18. So ye and your works are both dead carcases before him.

Therefore come to Christ in the way of believing ;
for

for the fulnes of the Spirit is lodged in him to be communicated, Rev. iii. 1. So uniting with him, ye shall receive the Spirit. The fire that was set to the incense, was brought from the altar of burnt-offering. See John xx. 22. & Gen. ii. 7.

2. To believers. (1.) Let this comfort you under, and reconcile you to, the state of infirmities, where-with ye are compassed, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10. Though sinless infirmities are not to be desired, and sinful ones are much to be lamented; yet it is matter of rejoicing, that in these the Spirit gives sweet experience of his help.

(2.) Learn to look habitually for the help of the Spirit under your infirmities. While ye consider what ye have to do or bear, it is reasonable you cast one eye on your infirmity, but another eye upward for the Spirit's help. And by this means you will get his help, Luke xi. 13. *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

DOCTR. III. *Such is the weakness of God's own children, that they have not skill to manage even their addresses to God by prayer aright, without the Spirit. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* They are like children putting their hand to a work, but with so little skill, that they must needs have one to stand over them, and direct them at every turn.

In discoursing from this point, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in this truth.

II. Wherein believers are ready, through their weakness, to mistake, go wrong, and mismanage in their prayers.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. I shall shew what is implied in this truth. It implies,

1. That they are not of themselves able for what is to be done and borne in the Christian life, 2 Cor. iii. 5. So far from it, that they do not well know what is necessary for their help, what to seek of God for that end, and how to seek it. If a duty is to be done, a cross to be borne, they are at a loss there through weakness and infirmity; that sets them to their prayers: but then they are at a loss there again, they know not what, and how to ask.

2. That the children of God are all praying persons, Zech. xii. 10. If they can speak at all, they will speak to God by prayer: and even when they either cannot speak, or have no access to speak, if they have the exercise of judgement, they will pray in their hearts, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. So the habitual neglect of prayer is none of the spots of God's people. There is no child so unnatural, as to be still in his father's presence, and never to converse with him.

3. A gift of prayer, without the Spirit of prayer, cannot be sufficient to make one right prayer, that will be acceptable to God, John iv. 24. Gifts of prayer are bestowed on believers, as well as others: but still they know not what to pray for as they ought, without the Spirit prompting them. The prayer that is the mere exercise of a gift, may indeed be edifying to the hearers, but cannot be acceptable to God.

4. Nay, habitual grace is not sufficient for praying aright; for still there is a necessity of actual assistance from the Spirit, Psal. lxxx. 18. *Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.* Life is not sufficient for making a discourse to our prince; a man may have life, and yet not be able to speak a word: but some vigour and liveliness is necessary to such a purpose. So spiritual life never departs wholly from the believer, 1 John iii. 9. but it must be breathed on anew to fit him for praying, Cant. iv. ult. New influences are still necessary; hence is the promise, If. xxvii. 3. *I will water it every moment.*

5. Lastly, Prayers are marred so far as the Spirit of

of God does not assist the party in them ; they are marred so far in point of acceptance with God, Eph. ii. 18. As no prayer can be accepted but through Christ's intercession, so none will be offered to God by the Intercessor farther than it is the product of the influence of his own Spirit. Nadab and Abihu's hearth-fire offered with the incense, was a costly lesson of this, Lev. x. 1. 2. 3. So if, through the whole prayer, the Spirit's assistance is wanting, the whole will be unaccepted ; if in any of it, that wherein it is wanting will be so.

II. The next head is to shew, wherein believers are ready, through their weakness, to mistake, go wrong, and mismanage in their prayers. They are ready to do so both in the matter and manner of them.

First, In the matter of prayer, *We know not what to pray for.* Even the things to be prayed for, they are not so well versed in them, but they are ready to go wrong therein. So that they need the Spirit's teaching, to tell them and make them take up their errand, when they are going and come to God in prayer ; they need to be set right, and kept right in the very matter of prayer. Their weakness in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to pray against their own mercy. Thus did Job, chap vi. 8. 9. *O that I might have my request ! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for ! even that it would please God to destroy me ; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off.* When Satan was permitted to take all from him, there was an express reserve of his life as the greatest mercy : but he prays very earnestly against it, though no doubt at long-run Job blessed God from his heart that he did not hear him in that. We are so weak, that in God's dispensations many times we take our friends for our foes, and call what is for our good, evil, as Jacob did when he said, *All these things are against me,* Gen. xlvi. 36.

2. They are apt to seek what is not so good, as God has a mind to give them, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* And he said unto me, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* To be freed from the messenger of Satan was good, but to have God's grace poured in sufficiently to maintain the combat, was better. And therefore Paul upon reflection takes God's way to have been better than what he himself proposed, ver. 9. *Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* Narrow asking oft-times makes narrow receiving. It fares with believers sometimes as with Joash, 2 Kings xiii. 18. 19. *Elisha said unto him, Take the arrows:* and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, *Smite upon the ground:* and he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, *Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hast consumed it:* whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice. They are straitened in their own bowels in asking, and therefore they come not speed.

3. They are apt to seek what would be for their hurt. So did Jonah, when he wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live,* chap. iv. 8. It would have been very ill for Jonah to have died in such a bad frame and temper of spirit, as he was then in. And if God had struck him immediately, it is like he would immediately have changed his note. David prayed for the life of the child, 2 Sam. xii. 16. but God took it away, for it would have been a living blot upon him. As a foolish child seeks a knife to play with, which he can do nothing with, but hurt himself; so we are apt to seek from God, what in mercy he keeps from us.

4. They are apt to seek food for their corrupt lusts and affections, Matth. xx. 20. 21. *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.* And he

he said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom. James and John were tickled with a lust of ambition, and they seek honour to satisfy it. And it is God's goodness to his people in such a case, not to do with them, as he did with the lusty Israelites, Psal. cvi. 15. *He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.* Men may go wrong here, and not see their error, till the Lord correct it : for they may take lust for love, Luke ix. 54. 55. and so seek to feed their enemies whom they should starve.

5. They are apt, through ignorance or inadvertency, not to pray for what they really need for their case ; as the children of Israel, when they *went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin ? Judg. xx. 18.* To pray for God's presence with them, was not in their head : but that they really needed it, they afterwards felt to their cost. Many sad experiences praying people may have of this, which may shew the need of the Spirit's assistance. Hence general and formal prayers, little suited to the particular cases and exigencies of the party ; which is but trifling in so solemn and serious a matter as prayer to God.

6. Though they do know and advert to it before they go to prayer, they are ready to forget it in the time. There is a forgetting of particular petitions designed or coming of course, which is an effect of the Spirit's influence : in that case the forgotten petition is from one's own spirit, not from the Spirit of God ; as in the instance of the prodigal son, Luke xv. what he designed to say to his father, ver. 19. *Make me as one of thy hired servants,* when he came to him he forgets, ver. 21. There is such a forgetting which is an effect of our own weakness : in that case the petition forgotten is from the Spirit of God, the forgetting it from ourselves, Heb. ii. 1. Thus going to

to God sometimes, we forget much of our errand, whether by wandering of heart, or being left to ourselves in the matter. In a word,

7. Lastly, They are apt to pray for things not agreeable to the will of God, that there is neither precept nor promise for. The many petitions in which they are not heard evince this; because if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us, 1 John v. 14. There is so much remains of corruption in the best, that it is hard even in our prayers to keep within the compass of what is agreeable to his will.

I shall now endeavour to assign the reasons why God's own children are so apt to mistake and go wrong even in the matter of prayer.

The great reason is, the remains of darkness that are on the minds of the best, while here, Job xxxvii. 19. *Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* It is true, God's children are not in midnight-darkness, but their light is but a twilight, in which they are apt to mistake their way. And the more sensible they are of this, the more need they will find of the Spirit's help in prayer. More particularly, we know not what we should pray for, but are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer,

1. Because we have at best but little knowledge of our own case: and no wonder that they who are not thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the disease, mistake as to the remedy. The blind man, Mark viii. 22.—25. is an emblem of the natural man, the true convert, and the glorified saint. The child of God while here *sees but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Every believer is a mystery, Cant. iii. 6. a mystery to the world, a mystery to himself. There are many folds and plies in his case, which he himself cannot unfold; plies of grace, sin, temptation, danger, &c.

2. Little knowledge of what is good and best for us, Gen. xlvi. 36. We see, the weakness of understanding in children, makes them often to desire of

parents

parents what really is not for them: even so it is with God's children, and therefore it is fatherly love that denies some of their petitions; as in the case of Job, Jonah, and others. We are apt to think that that is best for us that is most pleasant and most easy: but that is often a very deceitful rule.

3. Little acquaintance with the word, particularly the commands and the promises, the measure of our petitions. There is much need of the Spirit's help in that matter, John xiv. 26. We are ready to measure our petitions rather by our own inclinations, than by the word: and many read the Bible often, that have but very little skill of making a practical improvement thereof in their prayers, Mark x. 35. 37.

4. We are apt to take the subtle cravings of lust for the cravings of grace or innocent affection, Luke ix. 54. 55. And thence good people unwittingly are made intercessors for their spiritual enemies; which if they did discern, they would confess their error, and retract their request. Sin dwells in the believer together with grace, and that so closely, that the language of the one is often taken for that of the other.

5. Believers are liable to prejudices, and wrong notions of things, which they have drunk in from their education, manner of life in the world, &c. Such was the disciples notion of the temporal kingdom of Christ, that was the spring of that rash petition of James and John, Mark x. 37. *Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand in thy glory.* Such was that of the case of Gentiles among the believing Jews, that was the spring of the offence taken at Peter, Acts xi. 2. 3. *They that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.* An erring conscience will mislead men under pretence of divine authority, John xvi. 2. Acts xxvi. 9. No wonder then it form wrong requests in prayer, Luke ix. 54.

6. Lastly, They are subject to much confusion in prayer,

prayer, both through natural and spiritual indisposition, Psal. lxxvii. 4. Hence they are ready as Job did, chap. xxxviii. 2. to *darken counsel by words without knowledge*. The exercise of their very gift is not always ready at hand with them, far less the exercise of their grace. An influence of the Spirit is necessary, both for the one and the other. And when it is wanting, so that they are in no case for praying, no wonder they know not what to pray for.

Secondly, Believers are ready to go wrong in the manner of prayer: *We know not what we should pray for as we ought*. It is not in vain our Lord gave his disciples a direction in that point, Matth. vi. 9. *After this manner pray ye, &c.* The prayer may be right as to the matter, that yet may be mismanaged in the manner of performance, 1 Chron. xv. 13. And therefore there is need of the Spirit's help in this point too; not only to teach us what, but how to pray. Their weakness in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to flip the best season for managing their address before the throne. Thomas missed an opportunity of communion with Christ, that left him under the feet of unbelief, while the rest were delivered from theirs, John xx. 24. 25. The best season is, when the signal is given from heaven to the petitioner, to come forward: sometimes the door is as it were cast open to him, and there is a sign given by some inward motion of the Spirit, or some providential call, moving him to come forward. The spouse missed this, Cant. v. 2. 3. *I sleep, but my heart waketh, &c.* and she smarted for it, ver. 6. *I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spoke: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer.* Moses was very careful to fall in with it immediately, Exod. xxxiv. 8. 9. *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for*

it is a stiff-necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

2. They are apt to enter on prayer with a temper of spirit very unfit for such a holy exercise; being either entangled with worldly cares, or discomposed with unruly passions, Luke xxi. 34. 1 Tim. ii. 8. They both make the spirit of a man, like troubled water, unfit to receive the image of the sun, unfit for divine communications. Jonah's prayer behoved to be marred when he was in a fret. Therefore the apostle exhorts married persons to take heed to their behaviour one towards another, that *their prayers might not be hindered*, 1 Pet. iii. 7. nothing being more apt to do it than domestic jars, Mal. ii. 13.

3. They are apt to be formal, lifeless, and cold-rise in prayer, Cant. iii. 1. Rev. iii. 2. We are called to be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. But even where the fire of grace is in the hearth, unless it be blown up by the influence of the Spirit of God, the prayers will be mismanaged, Psal lxxx. 18. There will be bands of iniquity on the heart, which they will not be able to loose, more than to dissolve the ice with their breath: but *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the liberty*.

4. Their hearts are apt to wander in duty, and will do so if the Spirit fix them not. Therefore David prays, *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, Psal. lxxvi. 11. When Abraham had divided the carcasses, the fowls came down on them: so when one is conversing with God, evil spirits will be at work, to cast in something that may divert him from the present duty, Rom. vii. 21. Many a prayer is lost this way, while the heart steals away after some other thing than what it should then be on.

5. They are apt to content themselves with exercising their gift, without exercising their grace. Therefore Paul warns the Ephesians, chap. vi. 18. to *pray always. with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance*. Hence many

many petitions, confessions, thanksgivings, all of them just; yet lost, for want of suitable affections coming along with them. For it is the exercise of praying graces, reverence, faith, love, humility, &c. and not the exercise of praying gifts without them, that is pleasing to God.

6. They are apt to disproportion their concern to the weight of the matters they pray for. This is carefully guarded against in the Lord's prayer, Matth. vi. 9. &c. where the glory of God has the first place, and there is but one petition for temporals, and two for spirituals. But how ready are we to be more concerned for our own interest, than for the honour of God; more fervent for temporal, than for spiritual mercies? This makes the prayers like the legs of the lame that are not equal, the affection being disproportioned to the matter.

7. They are apt to be too peremptory in circumstances, without leaving a due latitude to sovereignty. That is limiting the holy One of Israel. This is often done as to time, the timing of mercies, in which we are too apt to take upon us to prescribe to the sovereign Manager, John ii. 3. 4. as to the manner of bringing about a mercy, which, short-sighted as we are, we are very ready to determine. And the same may be said as to the measure of mercies.

8. They are apt to mix their own wild fire with the holy fire in prayer. So did the disciples, Mark iv. 38. when they say, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* The language of passion is sometimes mixed with the language of grace in the prayers of saints; which when they discern, they will be ready to correct, Psal. lxxvii. 7.—10. Hence there are expressions of saints unto God, recorded in scripture, not for our imitation, but for our warning of this corrupt bias of the heart, as Job xxx. 21. *Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.* Jer. xv. 18. *Why is my pain perpetual? and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?*

healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? These he looks on as the ravings of his sick children.

9. They are apt to lay too much weight of their acceptance in their prayers, on what will bear none of it. It is certain, that there is nothing will bear any weight of that, but the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, Rev. viii. 4. But the natural bias of the heart lies another way, to lay weight on the very performance of the duty, and the way how it is performed, as with such affection, pointedness, length, nay the very voice, as insignificant a thing as it is before the Lord. Hence our Lord cautions against *using vain repetitions in prayer, as the Heathen do: for they think (says he) that they shall be heard for their much speaking*, Matth. vi. 7. And that the Heathen laid much stress on a loud voice in prayer, appears from what Pharaoh says to Moses, Exod. ix. 28. *Heb. Make ye supplication to the Lord, and much,* i. e. Make much supplication. Compare 1 Kings xviii. 28. where it is said of Baal's prophets, that *they cried aloud*. There are remains of that legal bias in the hearts of God's own children, Matth. xix. 27. And it is only by the Spirit that saints are brought to lay their whole weight on Jesus Christ, Eph. ii. 18. Phil. iii. 3. Otherwise their deceitful hearts will be found disposed to slip aside that way, they being very ready to believe the acceptance of some fluent prayer of theirs, and hard to believe the acceptance of one that goes not so fluently though seriously; yet the blood of Jesus is still the same security.

10. *Lastly*, They are apt to faint and give over, upon the Lord's delaying to answer; whereas it is a chief piece of right management of business at the court of heaven, resolutely to insist and hang on, Luke xviii. 1. 8.* We are naturally hasty, and long

* See some excellent sermons of the author's on this subject in the first volume of Sermons and discourses, first published in 1753.

trials are apt to run us out of breath. There is need of much faith, that patience may have her perfect work: and that is not to be reached without the help of the Spirit, Rom. xv. 13.

I shall now give the reasons why believers are so apt to go wrong in the manner of prayer. They are the following.

1. Because of the sublimity of the work, that is so far above our reach, that we can by no means know how to manage it, but as we are taught by him with whom we have to do in it. To say a prayer in a formal uttering of words, is no such hard work indeed. But rightly to manage an address at the throne of heaven, on which sits the Sovereign Majesty; and that about the weightiest of all concerns; is such sublime work, that it passes the skill of the greatest orator on earth, to do it without the Spirit, Eccl. v. 1. 2. Were any of us to go on business to our earthly king, would we not need to be directed by some knowing the way of the court? How much more do we need direction from the Holy Spirit in our addresses to the throne of grace?

2. Because of the remains of corruption that yet hang about them, Rom. vii. 24. This is a clog at their heels at all times, and will not miss to exert itself in holy duties, ver. 21. *When I would do good, evil is present with me.* There is much darkness yet in the minds of the best, as to spiritual things: no wonder they know not how to pray as they ought. Much perverseness there is in the will, both with respect to God's precepts and providences. There is much carnality and disorder in the affections, as they all soundly feel, that are concerned to get the heart fit for praying, kept right in it, and kept right after it.

3. Because there is a subtle adversary busy to mar them in that their work, Zech. iii. 1. He well knows that all the hope in their case is from the divine help; and therefore while they are before the throne of

mercy,

mercy, he will bestir himself effectually to mar their application. He is an enemy to prayer, and therefore he will keep back from it if he can; if he cannot, he will do his utmost to mar it.

4. *Lastly,* Because of the weakness of grace in them. Grace disposes men to pray, Zech. xii. 10. But the weakness of that grace leaves them in hazard of mismanaging in it. Sometimes it is not in exercise; at best it is but weak, and mixed with corruption, in the struggle with which it will be overcome, if the Spirit come not in to its help.

I shall now make some practical improvement. This doctrine may be of use, both unto strangers to God, and to his own children. And,

FIRST, Ye that are strangers to God, yet in your natural state, without the Spirit, and therefore children of Satan, we may take you up in these two sorts to be spoke to, *viz.* prayerless natural persons, and praying natural persons.

First, Prayerless natural unconverted persons, such as are living in the state they were born in, and without living without praying to the God that made them. I have two things to say to you from this doctrine.

1. Learn from it, that this prayerless life of yours declares your case a very sad one. It declares you,
(1.) None of God's children; for whatever mismanagements of it they fall into, they all practise the duty of prayer. So of you that is verified, Deut. xxxii. 5. *Their spot is not the spot of his children.* And if so, ye are the children of the devil, John viii. 44. of the family of hell. And his possession of you remains undisturbed to this day, since ye have never been so far awakened, as to set you to, and keep you at prayer.

(2.) Without the Spirit of God, Jude 19. And being without the Spirit, ye are spiritually dead in sin; for so are all naturally, Eph. ii. 1. and it is the Spirit that quickeneth, John vi. 63. So that whoso-

ever are without the Spirit are dead still. You are then dead souls in living bodies. It is plain you are dead, for your speech is laid, your sensēs are gone, there is no moving nor breathing towards God in you, and the Spirit of life is departed from you.

2. Be exhorted from it to reform. And,

(1.) Set about prayer, 1 Theſſ. v. 17. Remember ye are God's creatures, and therefore obliged to worship him. Ye are men, and not beasts, and therefore should distinguish yourselves from them by religion, If. xlvi. 8. Ye have souls that will not die, and therefore ye should be concerned to pray for them, that ye live not in eternal misery.

(2.) Be concerned to partake of the Spirit, and come to Christ for that end, who *bath the seven Spirits of God*, Rev. iii. 1. Ye say ye cannot pray. If the Spirit of Christ were in you, it would not be so, Zech. xii. 10. Gal. iv. 6. Ye say, ye have no time for prayer, or ye have no place to pray in. If the Spirit of Christ were in you, ye would have a heart to pray; and if ye had the heart for it, ye would find both time and place.

Secondly, Praying natural unconverted persons. People may be praying persons, and yet in the gall of bitterness, and none of God's children: praying persons, and yet profane, If. i. 15. 16. formal hypocrites, Matth. xxix. 14. 27. 28. They may have a gift of prayer, that are void of the Spirit and grace of prayer. To such I would say from this doctrine, Then,

1. Certainly ye can pray none at all aright; an evidence of which is, All your prayers are rejected of God, Prov. xv. 8. John ix. 31. If God's own children cannot pray aright without the Spirit, how is it possible ye should do so, who neither have the Spirit, nor yet are children of God? If the weak man cannot go without help, sure the man void of life cannot move at all. View your own case in the case of the true saint, and think, if it be so in the green tree, what must it be in the dry. They are God's children,

children, yet cannot pray aright to their Father without the Spirit: how much less can ye who are none of his family, and therefore never have the Spirit? They always have the Spirit dwelling in them as a Spirit of life, yet cannot pray aright without actual influence from him: how then can ye ever pray aright, who are so far from his actual influence, that he is not so much as in you, since ye are not in Christ? Hence,

(1.) Your praying, though continued never so many years, without coming to Christ by faith, is but like so many ciphers, which being without a figure at their head, the value is just nought. There is never one right or acceptable prayer among them all, Heb. xi. 6. They are all lost labour. And such a life of duties is but a wandering in the wilderness of duties, like Israel's wandering forty years in the wilderness, where they died at length, and never entered Canaan.

(2.) All your prayers are *turned to sin*, Psal. cix. 7. If ye have never prayed aright, ye have always prayed wrong, spilled and marred that duty, profaned that holy ordinance. And so what ye reckon so much praying to God, God will reckon so much taking of his name in vain, for which he will not hold you guiltless. Wherefore let praying persons look well to their state.

2. Think not much of your gifts of prayer, for a gift of prayer will go short way before God. If it were never such a ready, full, and taking gift, it cannot make a man pray one petition aright without the Spirit, John iv. 24. Yet how are men puffed up with such a gift, that have it, and have not grace to keep them humble under it? They think themselves something on the account of their gift, while God knows they are nothing, as being without the Spirit; for they see wherein they excel others, but see not wherein they come short of true prayer in the sight of God, Gal. vi. 3. 4. I have four things to say of a gift of prayer, without the Spirit of prayer.

(1.) It is a *good gift* of God indeed, Jam. i. 17. But it is but a left-hand gift, which may be lost and taken away again from him that has it now, Zech. xi. ult. *Wo to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened;* compared with John x. 12: for the prophecy relates to the scribes and Pharisees. It is of that sort that is common to Christ's sheep and the devil's goats. The Spirit of prayer is a grace-gift, a right hand gift, which can never be quite lost, Rom. xi. 29. *For the gifts and calling of God are without re-pentance.*

(2.) It may be useful to others for the profit of their souls, but in that respect it is useless to yourselves, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. 2. 3. Others may have communion with God in your exercise of your gift, but you yourself can have none, Prov. xv. 8. Gifts are bestowed on hypocrites for the good and behoof of the saints, as the purse-bearer to a young prince gets his purse filled, to answer the needs of the prince, 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23. The raven, though an unclean creature, was employed to feed Elijah. The gift the carpenters had that built the ark, was of use to the saving of Noah and his family, but they themselves perished in the deluge, for all their skill of ark-building.

(3.) It cannot but be hurtful to your own souls; which hurtfulness is not from the good gift itself, but from the light and foolish heart it is lodged in, Prov. i. 32. The very gospel, 2 Cor. ii. 16. is hurtful that way; yea Christ himself is a stumbling-block by that means. A man with a gift of prayer, without the Spirit, is like a ship without ballast; the more sail she has, she is in the greater danger of being overwhelmed.

(4.) You may perish for ever, for all that gift Judas had a gift of praying doubtless given him with the gift of preaching; yet for all it he fell from his ministry,

ministry, and is gone to his own place, Acts i. 25. The light of a gift without the warmth of the Spirit of grace, serves to shew the way to outer darkness. And such a gift will aggravate the condemnation of the possessor, being like a bag of gold on a drowning man, that makes him only to sink the sooner and the deeper.

3. Lastly, Come forward then another step in religion, and be concerned for a higher attainment in it, than ye have yet reached. Ye have come the length of praying, that is good, but it is not all : if ye stick there, ye perish : Come forward to Christ, out of all confidence in your prayers, by believing uniting with the Son of God. Ye have attained to the gift of prayer : come forward till ye reach the Spirit of prayer, which Christ communicates to all his members, John i. 12. with Gal. iv. 6.

SECONDLY, Ye that are God's own children, to you I would say,

1. Surely many a mismanaged prayer hath gone through your mouths, so that ye may say, *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*, Is. lxiv. 6. So much prayer as has been made by you without the Spirit, so much mismanaged unacceptable prayer has there been, for which ye need pardon. Ye may here view,

(1.) The many prayers of yours, that have been the mere lifeless exercise of a gift, without the Spirit from the beginning of them to the end. All which have been lost prayers by the lump. Since ye were acquainted with Christ, ye have kept a constant course of praying daily : but at this rate it will be found there have been many days, and perhaps weeks and months, wherein ye have prayed none at all aright and acceptably. So that if ye seek your prayers in heaven, which ye think ye have sent thither, it will be found that many of them never came there ; they wanted the wings of the Spirit's influences, and so fell upon the earth, and are lost.

(2.) The

(2.) The many parts of some of your prayers, and some parts of the best of them, that have been the mere product of your own spirits, and not of the Spirit of God. How much of the prayer has been over many times, ere your lips have been touched with the live-coal? And perhaps ere ye have done, ye have quenched the coal, provoked the Spirit to depart. And when it has been best with you, the deceitful heart has made a sinful mixture in it. At this rate seeking many a long prayer before the throne, ye would find that but a short part of it came thither; perhaps but a few sentences. For alas! the skin and dung of our sacrifices are often more bulk, than the flesh that comes on the altar.

2. Be humbled under a sense of your mismanagements in the prayers ye have prayed all along to this day; *for in many things we offend all*, Jam. iii. 2. See the need ye have of the blood of Christ to purge away the guilt of your prayers, and apply it by faith for that end, Rev. vii. 14. Lament the too little concern ye have had to get the Spirit's help to your praying, and see for the pardon thereof.

3. *Lastly*, Learn that praying is a more solemn serious work than it is generally looked on to be; and that it is not such an easy thing to pray to purpose, as we are apt to imagine. Take these three warnings then.

(1.) Trust not to your gift of prayer, neither be vain of it, Prov. iii. 5. 1 Cor. i ult. Oh! it is sad to think of that vanity, and airiness, and self seeking that is to be found in some people's exercise of their praying gift. It is an argument that the person forgets both God, and himself. And nothing can be more contrary to the help of the Spirit in prayer. The heart is deceitful in this point, and we have need to watch it.

(2.) Trust not to your frame. One may have a good frame before he go to prayer, and yet when he comes to the work, may not find his hands; hence often

often least is got when most is expected; because it is expected rather on what we have, than what we look for from the Spirit. A person may have a good frame in prayer, that may quickly leave him; the wheels of the soul in swift motion, may suddenly stop, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Prov. xxviii. 26.

(3) When ye go to prayer, be impressed with a sense of your inability to manage it aright, Josh. xxiv. 19. and then, and all along in prayer, lay yourselves open, and look for the help of the Spirit. Lay the sacrifice on the altar, and look to the Lord for fire from heaven to consume it, as Elijah did, 1 Kings xviii. 33. 37. 38. The Spirit is that fire.

I proceed to another doctrine from the text.

Doctr. IV. All our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work, his making intercession for us.

In handling this point, I shall shew,

- I. What is to be understood by praying aright.
- II. That all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit.
- III. In what respects our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work.
- IV. What is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making intercession for us is.
- V. *Lastly, Apply the whole.*

I. I am to shew what is to be understood by praying aright.

Negatively, 1. It is not praying aright in a legal sense, without any imperfection in the eye of the law, attending the prayer. There was never a prayer in the world, of that sort, since Adam's fall, except the prayers of the man Christ. The best prayers of the best saints have always been attended with blemishes visible

visible to the eyes of God, though not to ours, If. lxiv. 6. Such praying is our duty indeed, Matth. v. ult. but the attainment of none in this life, by any measure of grace to be expected, Phil. iii. 12.

2. It is not praying aright in a moral sense, where in the most rigid hearer can discern nothing contrary to the precepts of morality. A prayer may be so far right, as no unlawful thing may be prayed for in it, and yet be naught, Luke xviii. 11. The matter may be very good, where the manner of praying spoils all. If that were enough, the book-prayers of formalists would be sufficient help in some cases to pray aright.

3. It is not praying aright in a rhetorical sense, a well-worded prayer, with a suitable delivery. Words, voice, and gesture, are of little moment before God, 1 Sam. xvi. 7 1 Cor. ii. 4. It may be a right prayer, where the expression is far from being polite, where sentences are broken off before they make a complete sense, as in Psal. vi. 3. *My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?* The Lord himself knows what is the mind of the Spirit, though the words do not fully express it. And where all these things are accurate and exact, the prayer may be all wrong before God: where there is not a wrong word, there may not be one right affection.

Positively, It is praying aright in an evangelical sense, so that in the eye of the gospel it passes as acceptable prayer before the throne. This implies two things.

1. Sincerity in prayer, 1 Chron. xxix. 17. in opposition to formality and hypocrisy, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Psal. xvii. 1. The righteous God loveth uprightness of heart in duty, Prov. xv. 8; and though there may be many blemishes in the duty, where the man is sincere in it, the Lord will regard it, notwithstanding of these blemishes. Hereby the heart is really for God as the chief good, and goes along with the tongue in prayer.

2. A perfection of parts in prayer, though not of degrees. That is to say, Praying aright is,

(1.) Praying for things agreeable to God's will revealed in his word of command or promise, 1 John v. 14. Nothing can make praying for things without the compass of the command and promise, to be praying aright. For there faith has nothing to bottom itself upon ; and *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6.

(2.) Praying in a right manner in a gospel-sense, Jer. xxix. 13. *Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* Hereunto are required praying graces and affections in exercise, as faith, fervency, humility, reverence, and the like. These are the soul and life of prayer ; whereas the expressions of the lips are but the body of it. Where these are wanting, the duty will be reckoned but *bodily exercise*, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Such praying is right in so far as it is acceptable in the sight of God, i. e. capable of being accepted according to the rule of the gospel. It is a sacrifice fit to be laid on God's altar ; a prayer which may be put in the Mediator's hand, that through his intercession it may be actually accepted. For it is not any thing in our prayers themselves for which they are accepted, but only the intercession of Christ, for the best things in them are mixed with sin. Only such prayers are fit to be put in the Mediator's hands, and he will take them off the sinner's hand to present them to the Father, and the Father will accept them at his hand : whereas other sorts of prayer, wherein the petitioner is not sincere, or where they are wrong as to the matter of them, or are not made in the right manner, they cannot come into the Mediator's hand, he will never present them for acceptance ; and so it is impossible they can be accepted.

Hence it is evident, that none who are out of Christ, unregenerate, unconverted, can at all pray aright, or pray as they ought. For what sincel-

rity can be there, where converting grace has never touched? What faith, fervency, or humility, can be exercised by unbelievers dead in sin, whose stony heart is not yet removed? Therefore the form of prayer, Matth. vi. begins, *Our Father*, &c. shewing that none can pray aright or acceptably but God's own children, or those who have an interest in him as their Father; and it is the Spirit that teaches them so, Gal. iv. 6.

II. I am next to shew, that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit. This is to be understood as comprehending these two things.

1. It is done by the help of the Spirit indwelling in us, Gal. iv. 6. Ye are not to think that the Spirit as an external agent helps us to pray aright: nay but the Spirit helping to pray is, as a Spirit of life, dwelling in the man as a member of Christ, 1 John ii. 27. So that till we have the Spirit dwelling in us, we can never pray aright.

2. It is done by the help of the indwelling Spirit actually influencing us, Gal. iv. 6. *crying, Abba, Father*, i. e. so influencing us as to make us cry. Even the indwelling of the Spirit is not enough for that effect: but there is requisite an agency of the Spirit in us, whereby we may be acted in prayer; which is called *the blowing of the wind*, John iii. 8. Cant. iv. ult.

Now that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit indwelling and influencing, is clear,

1. From scripture-testimony. The Spirit is the author of our whole sanctification, whereof praying aright is a part, 2 Thess. ii. 13. particularly, of all our acceptable worship, Phil. iii. 3. It is by him we have access to God in worship, Eph. ii. 18. And prayer by name, if of the right sort, is owing to his help, Eph. vi. 18. and that as an indwelling Spirit, a Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. with Gal. iv. 6. and an influencing Spirit, 1 Thess. v. 17. 18. 19.

2. We

2. We are spiritually dead without the Spirit indwelling, and spiritually asleep without the Spirit influencing, Eph. ii. 1. Cant. v. 2. Neither a dead man, nor a sleeping man, is fit to present a supplication to the king: so neither is a dead sinner, nor a sleeping saint, capable to pray aright. The former, praying, is like a ghost walking and talking; the latter, like a man speaking through his sleep. It is the Spirit that quickens the dead soul, John vi. 63. who coming to dwell in the heart makes the first resurrection: and it is he also who awakens the sleeping saint, Cant. v. 4.

3. There is no praying aright without sanctifying grace, nor without that grace in exercise, John ix. 31. Cant. iii. 1. Where sanctifying grace is not, the filth and pollution of sin remains, and defiles all, Tit. i. 15. So that such a man's praying is like the opening of an unripe grave, Rom. iii. 13. Accordingly the praying Pharisees are called *whited sepulchres*, Matth. xxiii. 27. Where grace is not in exercise, there is incense indeed, but no pillar of smoke ascending from it to heaven; spikenard indeed, but no smell thereof. Now it is the indwelling Spirit that works sanctifying grace, 2 Theff. ii. 13. puts that grace in exercise, Cant. iv. 16. and so fits men to pray, Zech. xii. 10.

4. *Lastly*, To praying aright is required light and warmth, a light of the mind, and warmth of affections; the former for the matter, the latter for the manner. And it is a false light and warmth that makes some natural men think, that sometimes they pray aright, Is. lviii. 2. But all genuine light, and vital warmth, comes from the Spirit, Eph. i. 17. 18. 2 Tim. i. 7. Hence the emblem of the virtue of the Holy Spirit was *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, Acts ii. 3. 4. And the effect thereof is someway compared with that of drunkenness, (which excuses it no more, than Christ's being compared to a thief excuses stealing, Rev. xvi. 15.); for as the liquor being received to

excess, influences the man, so that things come in his head which otherwise would not, and the affections and passions are wrought up by it, Prov. xxiii. 33. so the Spirit indwelling and influencing, presents to the mind matter of prayer, and works up ~~the~~ affections suitable thereto, Eph. v. 18. 19. Cant. vii. 9.

* III. I shall shew in what respects our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work. That it is so reckoned in scripture, is evident from the text, where his *interceding for us with groanings*, cannot be understood of himself as the subject, but of us, according to the analogy of faith. It is plain also from Gal. iv. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Now the Spirit's crying, *Abba, Father,* is meant certainly of our crying so, by the help of the Spirit, not of a crying whereof the Spirit is the subject; for God is not the Father of the Spirit, because it is the second person, and not the third, who is the Son of God; and Father and Son are the relatives. And thus the apostle explains it, Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* Now the reasons of this are,

1. Because all that is right in our prayers is from the Spirit, and all that is wrong in them from ourselves, either as to matter or manner, 1 Cor. xii. 11. 1 Pet. i. 22. with 2 Cor. iii. 5. In the incense of our prayers there is smoke that goes up towards heaven, ashes that remain behind on the earth; it is the fire from the altar that sends up the smoke, it is the earthly nature of the incense that occasions the ashes. The flesh of any such spiritual sacrifice is wholly owing to the Spirit, the skin and dung is our own, and ours only. Therefore all our right praying is justly reckoned the Spirit's work.

2. None pray aright but as they are members of Christ, and children of God, Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii.

15. John xv. 5. Now it is the Holy Spirit of the Head that dwells in and actuates all the members acting as members, 1 Cor. xii. 11. 12. Therefore as the soul sees by the eye, and hears by the ear; so whatsoever the members of Christ do aright as members, is justly ascribed to the Spirit that actuates the mystical body, and is the Spirit of adoption. But there may be a defect in seeing by the eye, and hearing by the ear: these are not to be ascribed to the soul, but to some disease in the eye or ear: So whatever defects may be in the members of Christ, these are not to be ascribed to the Spirit, but to the remains of corruption with them, and their state of imperfection while here.

3. The Spirit is the principal cause of our praying aright, we are but the instrumental causes of it. The act of praying in heart and expression is done by us: but the grace, ability, frame for prayer, and the exciting and bringing forth into exercise that grace and ability, is from the Spirit, Phil. ii. 12. 13. Hence prayer is said to be *inwrought* in us, Jam. v. 16. If the wind blow not, the spices send not forth their pleasant smell, Cant. iv. 16. As the sound of the horn ceases as soon as one ceases to wind it; so does our praying aright on the withdrawing of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

4. *Lastly,* All our praying graces, as all others, are in their exercise the product of the Spirit, and his work in us, Gal. v. 22. 23. There is a root and stock of grace in the believer, implanted and preserved by the Spirit, 1 John iii. 9. In prayer these are brought forth into exercise, the man acts faith, love, &c. and therein the soul of prayer lies: but look on them as they are so brought forth from the stock, and they are the fruit of the Spirit, though the believer is the tree they hang on. For the Spirit is the vital fructifying sap of the trees of righteousness, Is. xliv. 3. 4. Thus the holy lustings, longings, and desires of a believer against sin, are called *the Spirit's lustings*,

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Gal. v. 17. (compare ver. 16. 18.) in the same sense as the groanings in our text. See **1 John iv. 4.**

Object. If our praying aright is the work of the Spirit, what need have we of the intercession of Christ, for the acceptance of our prayers? Surely the Spirit needs no intercessor betwixt him and the Father. *Ans.* Though it is the Spirit's work, it is not his work separately by himself without us; but it is his work in us, and so our work too, **Gal. iv. 6.** with **Rom. viii. 15.** And so far as it is done by us, we groaning, lusting, crying in prayer, every thing has a sinful mixture from us at best: so there is need of Christ's intercession still. The water comes pure from the fountain, the Spirit; but running through a muddy channel, such as every saint here is, it cannot be accepted in heaven, but as purified and sweetened by the intercession of Christ.

IV. I come now to consider, what is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making intercession for us is. And here I shall shew,

1. The difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.

2. The help of the Spirit in prayer.

FIRST, I am to shew what is the difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.

1. Christ intercedes for us in heaven at the Father's right hand, **Rom. viii. 34.** The Spirit intercedes in our hearts, upon earth, **Gal. iv. 6.** We have no intercession made for us in heaven, but by Christ the only Intercessor there.

2. Christ's intercession is a mediatory intercession, wherein he mediates or goes between God and us; an office peculiar to him alone, **1 Tim ii. 5.** But the Spirit's intercession is an auxiliary intercession to us, whereby he helps us to go to God in a right manner, prompting us to intercede for ourselves aright.

3. The Spirit's intercession is the fruit of Christ's intercession, and what is done by the sinner through

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the Spirit's intercession, is accepted of God through the intercession of Christ. Christ by his death purchased the Spirit for his people, and through his intercession the Spirit is sent into their hearts, where he helps them to pray for themselves : and these prayers are accepted of God by means of the Mediator's intercession, John xiv. 16. & xvi. 7. 13. Rev. viii. 4. In a word,

The difference is such as is between one who draws a poor man's petition for him, and another who presents it to the king, and gets it granted. The Spirit does the former, and Christ does the latter, for us.

SECONDLY, I shall consider the help of the Spirit in prayer, which is his making intercession for us, in the style of the scripture. We shall view this work of the Spirit, more generally, and more particularly.

FIRST, More generally, and that in two things. He acts in it,

1. As a teaching Spirit, John xiv. 26. It is our infirmity in point of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* He enlightens our minds, and helps our ignorance as to the matter and manner of prayer, 1 John ii. 27. He is the great Teacher of the church, and none teacheth like him. He will teach them who are so weak that no other can teach them ; so that hearing some of God's weak children pray, one must needs say, *This is the finger of God.*

2. As a quickening Spirit, Psal. lxxx. 18. Therefore the Spirit is compared to fire, which gives both light and heat. He removes spiritual deadness, and stirs up praying graces in the heart ; whence his influences are compared to the blowing of the wind, that puts things that were at rest in motion. Thus he is said to *make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered*, setting the gracious heart a labouring and working towards God, with the utmost earnestness, as one groaning.

SECONDLY, More particularly, the work of the Spirit in our prayers lies here.

First, He excites us to pray, Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* He prompteth us to go to the throne of grace, who otherwise would be negligent of it, and backward to it, Cant. v. 2. 3. 4. *I sleep, but my heart waketh, &c. My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* Thus he leads us to God (Eph. ii. 18. Gr.) as an internal moving principle. This lies in two things.

1. He impresses our spirits with a sense of a divine call to it, and so binds it on our consciences as duty to God, Psal. xxvii. 8. *Heb. My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face, when thou saidst, Seek ye my face.* Thus he applies the general command for praying to particular times, that the man is made in effect to say, Now God is calling me to this duty: and so he sees he cannot slight it without disobedience, but must go to it from conscience of duty. This cuts off the low motives to prayer, of custom, credit, regard to the commands of men, &c.

2. He disposes our hearts for it, inclines us to the duty, that we willingly comply with it. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek,* Psal. xxvii. 8. Men may have a sense of the command on them, who, for want of a disposition to the duty commanded, either neglect the command, or else are but dragged to obey it. But the Spirit powerfully inclines the will to the duty, so that the man obeys out of choice, Psal. cx. 3. Cant. vi. 12. This cuts off the low motives of fear of man, and slavish fear of God too, which move many.

Secondly, He gives us a view of God as a gracious and merciful Father in Christ, Gal. iv. 6. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer. Where there is no spiritual view of God at all in prayer, we worship we know not what. Where we view him as an absolute God out of Christ, we may be filled with terror of him, but can have no true confidence in him. But by the Spirit viewing him in Christ, we have at once

once the sight of majesty and mercy. And hereby he works in us,

1. A holy reverence of God, to whom we pray, which is necessary in acceptable prayer, Heb. xii. 28. By this view he strikes us with a holy dread and awe of the majesty of God, whereby is banished that lightness and vanity of heart, that makes such flanting in the prayers of some, as if they were set down on their knees to shew their gift, and commend themselves.

2. A holy confidence in him, Eph. iii. 12. *Abba*, Father, speaks both reverence and confidence, whereof the Spirit is the author, Rom. viii. 15. This confidence respects both his ability and willingness to help us, Matth. vii. 11. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer, Heb. xi. 6. Jam. i. 6. This is it that makes prayer an ease to a troubled heart, the Spirit exciting in us holy confidence in God as a Father. Hence the soul, though not presently eased, draws these conclusions. (1.) He designs my good by all the hardships I am under, Rom. viii. 28. (2.) He pities me under them, Psal. ciii. 13. (3.) He knows the best time for removing them, and will do it, when that comes, 1 Sam. ii. 3.

Hereby is cut off that unbelieving formality, whereby some expect nothing by prayer, and get as little; as also the despondency, wherewith others are struck, from the sense of God's justice, and their own sinfulness.

Thirdly, He gives us a view of ourselves in our own sinfulness and unworthiness, John xvi. 8. This always accompanies the view the Spirit gives of God, If. vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.* We are very ready to become strangers to ourselves, and to lose sight of our sinfulness. But the Spirit of prayer, according to the measure of his influence, opens out the man before his own eyes, casts

casts abroad the many foul plies of his heart and life, Luke xviii. 13. If. Ixiv. 6. Hereby he works in us,

1. Humiliation of heart before the Lord, fills us with low thoughts of ourselves before him, Gen. xviii. 27. makes us see ourselves unworthy of the mercies, that either we have got, or desire to have, Gen. xxxii. 10. fills us with holy shame, and self-loathing, Luke xviii. 13. Ezek. xxxvi. 31. This fits us for the receipt of mercies of free grace; and the want of it makes sinners to be in their prayers, as if they came to buy of God, and not to beg, and so to be sent empty away.

2. Cordial confession, that comes away natively from seen and felt sinfulness, Psal. Ixii. 8. Thus the influence of the Spirit in prayer causes full and free confession of sin with the mouth, to the honour of God, and our own shame. And the things thus being impressed on the heart, there follow natively words to express them by; and where they fail, groans do well compensate them before the throne. This cuts off the formal, hale-hearted confessions of sin, wherewith prayers are often vitiated.

3. Hearty thanksgiving for mercies received, Psal. cxvi. 11. 12. Hereby the smallest mercies appear very big; and the sinner, that wondered at other times, how he came not to get more mercies, begins to wonder he has any at all left him, Lam. iii. 22. But without a discovery of our sinfulness by the Spirit, all our thanksgivings for mercies are but empty compliment, like the Pharisee's, Luke xviii. 11.

4. A high value for the Mediator and his righteousness, which lies out of the view of the unhumbled heart, Phil. iii. 9. As the stars are best seen from the bottom of a deep and narrow pit, so Christ crucified is best discovered in his excellency and suitableness, by the humbled soul. The lower the soul is in its own eyes, the higher will the Mediator be in its eyes; and the higher the Mediator is, the more fit one is to pray.

Fourthly, He gives us a view of our wants, and the need we have of the supply of them, Luke xv. 17. This may be seen, comparing the Pharisee's and publican's prayers, Luke xviii. 11. 12. 13. The Spirit taught the one, and not the other. The want of this marks prayer, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.* Here he acts,

1. As an enlightener, opening the eyes of the mind, to discern the wants and needs we are compassed with, Eph. i. 17. 18. The Spirit's shining in on the soul, as the sun on a moth-eaten garment holden up betwixt us and it, the soul gets a broad sight of its wants; whence it is made to say, as If. lxiv. 6. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Psal. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors?* This the Spirit doth by opening up the law in its spirituality, and giving us a view of our own circumstances in a present evil enflaming world.

2. As a remembrancer, bringing seasonably to mind the wants we have, or might have adverted to, John xiv. 26. To every thing there is a season: but oft-times in the season of getting supply at the throne of grace, our wants and needs escape us, they come not in mind, till the market is over. The Spirit is a remembrancer in this case, seasonably suggesting to us our needs for ourselves or others. So he sets things before us in time of prayer.

3. As a forewarner of what we may need, John xvi. 13. So we find Job not only offering sacrifice with a view to what he could not know, chap. i. 5. but also possessed with a fear of a trial before it came, chap. iii. 25. Thus men are led to lay up for what they may meet with, and in prayer to have a view to the grace that may be needful in such and such emergents. Hereby he helps us,

(1.) To matter of prayer, sets before us things to be

be prayed for. Where the Spirit is thus at work in the soul, persons will be taught to pray, and it will supply the want of a form: and therefore they that sooth themselves with that, they cannot pray, do but bewray themselves to be void of the Spirit of God.

(2.) To the right manner of praying: for hereby he,

[1.] Impresses us with a sense of need, that we are made to pray feelingly, that the tongue does but express what the heart feels, Luke xv. 17. 18. 19. Insensibleness of our needs makes us formal in prayer, and therefore to be sent empty away. A mere rational sight of our wants will not cure it; but the light of the Spirit is the light of life, John viii. 12. that will not miss to affect the heart.

[2.] Hereby we are rendered sincere in our addresses to God, Psal. xvii. 1. Feigned lips in prayer proceed from a dark and insensible heart. He that really sees his disease, and is persuaded of the need of the Physician, there is no doubt of his being in earnest for his help.

[3.] Hereby we are made importunate in prayer. Necessity has no law, and hunger breaks through stone-walls, as we see in the woman of Canaan, who did hang on, over the belly of discouragement, and would take no refusal. Importunate praying is prevailing, Luke xi. 8. and felt need that one cannot bear without relief, makes importunity.

[4.] Hereby we are made particular in prayer, laying our hand on our sores, and laying out our particular wants before the Lord, Luke xviii. 41. General prayers, like general preaching, have little of the Spirit in them. They that go where help is to be found, being indeed pinched, will readily tell where they are pinched.

Fifthly, He gives us a view of the grace and promises of the covenant, Psal. xxv. 14. John xiv. 26. Without this the sinner pressed with a sense of need, has nothing to support him, and therefore cannot pray in faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased all

all the grace and promises of the covenant for his people, and there is enough there for all they can need. It is the office of the Spirit to open them out before their eyes, and apply them. And here the Spirit,

1. Brings to their remembrance the grace and promises suited to their case, Gen. xxxii. 11. 12. The promises are the rule and encouragement of prayer; but while they lie out of our sight, we can neither have suitable direction nor encouragement from them: but when the Spirit draws near with the promise to us, there is help at hand in prayer.

2. He unfolds that grace and these promises, causing to understand them in a spiritual and saving manner, 1 Cor. ii. 12. The letter of the promise can only help to words in prayer; but the Spirit shining on the promise, will help to pray in a gracious manner; for the demonstration of the Spirit is always with power. Hereby,

(1.) The Spirit teaches what to pray for, according to the will of God. While the promises rightly understood regulate our prayers, and they are agreeable to the grace of the covenant, we may be sure we do not err in the matter, 2 Sam. vii. 28. 29. These are God's bills and bonds to his people, and by them he shews what he allows us to ask of him. What he is debtor to his faithfulness for, we may erave.

(2.) In what terms to pray for it, the terms of the promise, terms agreeable to the grace of the covenant. And this is the rise of some expressions of God's children in prayer, which may seem strange and uncouth to others, that have not their view of the grace of the covenant, which want makes them appear unseemly to them: yea they may seem strange to themselves. And hence also is the agreement to a nicety, that is to be found betwixt the answer of prayer, and their expression in prayer, sometimes.

(3.) Hereby he fills our mouths with arguments, helping

helping us to plead and pray, Job xxiii. 3. 4. The grace and promises of the covenant, held before the eyes by the Spirit shining on them to the soul in prayer, is such a fountain of heavenly oratory, that will make a weak and unlearned Christian plead and pray at the rate that others are strangers to, and which themselves at another time are quite unable to reach.

(4.) Hereby he stirs up in us a faith of particular confidence as to the thing prayed for, so that we are helped to pray believably, and not doubtingly and distrustfully. The necessity of this faith in prayer is evident from the scriptures, Matth. xxi. 22. Mark xi. 24. 1 Tim. ii. 8. Jam. i. 6. and the Spirit is the author of it, 2 Cor. iv. 13. He gives a view of the promise and grace of the covenant with relation to that thing, and helps to regulate the prayer thereby, strengthens to believe the accomplishment of the promise in that particular for the Mediator's sake, and consequently the hearing of prayer in that particular. Hereby it appears what this faith is, namely, a confidence agreeable to the promise as demonstrated by the Spirit; absolute as to the particular thing, where the promise is demonstrated absolute, or by the Spirit particularly applied to the thing, Psal. cxix. 49. which may be in things not absolutely necessary, as Mark v. 27. 28. 34. Or indefinite, where the promise is left so by the Spirit, that is to say, a confidence of the thing itself, or of what is as good. And hereby also this faith is distinguished from presumption, in that it is founded on a word of God, and the merit of Christ.

(5.) *Lastly*, Hereby he works in us a holy boldness in prayer, Eph. iii. 12. Faith coming before the thone, and spreading out the word of promise with the grace of the covenant, makes bold there for a gracious answer. How bold was Jacob in that case, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?* Gen. xxxii. 26. Foolish men have ignorantly censured this boldness in the prayers of God's children, but God is well

well pleased with it, when he says, *Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me,* If xlvi. 11.; though the counterfeiting of this holy oil must needs be dangerous. It is distinguished by its attending humility, as in Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.*

Sixthly, He raiseth in us holy desires for the supply of our wants; *groanings which cannot be uttered.* The Spirit working as fire, fires the heart in prayer, sets it in motion, Cant. v. 4. a lusting, longing, panting for what may tend to the perfection of the new creature, either removing the impediments of its growth, or supplying it with fresh incomes of grace for its growth. Of this more afterwards. But thus we are made to pray fervently, Jam. v. 16. Rom. viii. 11.

Seventhly, He gives us a view of the merit and intercession of the Mediator, Eph. i. 17. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, without whose illumination Christ will be a hidden beauty to us. He shewed Lechariah the Intercessor, at his work, Zech. i. 12. and Stephen, Acts vii. 56. and he shews believers the same gift for substance, by the eye of faith, Cor. ii. 12. *Hereby,*

1. He points us to the only way of acceptance of our prayers, John xiv. 6.; while hypocrites overlooking Christ, lose all their requests. He teaches us to pray as we ought, and so to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, depending on his merit and intercession allenantly.

2. He lays before us a firm foundation of confidence before the Lord, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;* an Advocate who never loses the plea he makes in hand, John xi. 42. having an undisputable ground to go upon, namely, the purchase of his own blood. A fresh view of this makes faith in prayer

renew its strength, and fills with confidence, Eph. iii. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

3. *Lastly*, He furnishes us with an answer to all objections, that an unbelieving heart and a subtle devil can muster up against us, in prayer, Rom. viii. 33. 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* Are we sinful and vile? The merit of Christ is of infinite value. Are we unworthy for whom God should do such a thing? Yet the Mediator is worthy. Can our prayers smelling so rank of sinful imperfections, not be accepted at our polluted hands? Yet being perfumed with his merit, they can be accepted at his hand, Rev. viii. 4.

Eighthly, He manages the heart and spirit in prayer, which every serious soul will own to be a hard task, Jer. x. 23. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* Gal. v. 16. Therefore the psalmist says, Psal. xxxi. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my spirit.* And,

1. He composes it for prayer, Psal. lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name.* He frames the heart, that is out of frame for it; commands a heavenly calm in the soul, whereby it may be fitted for divine communications; saying to the heart tossed with temptations, troubles, and risings of corruption, *Peace and be still:* and he blows up the fire of grace into a flame, 2 Tim. i. 7. So the preparation of the heart is owing to him, Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*

2. He fixes it in prayer, that it wander not away in the duty, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,* and

ye shall keep my judgements, and do them. There is need not only of quickening grace in duty, but of establishing grace; for the heart itself is apt to wander off from the serious purpose, and the powers of hell exert themselves to divert from it. But the supply of the Spirit in prayer keeps the heart fixed. And, in the case of wandering,

3. He reduces it from its wanderings in prayer, Psal. xxiii. 3. *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* It will always cost a struggle to hedge in the heart in duty, and the help of the Spirit is necessary to maintain the struggle, Rom. vii. 21. Gal. v. 17. But sometimes the heart is quite carried off by its wandering disposition, that the prayer is quite marred, the heart leaving the tongue. In this case the Spirit convinces and humbles the soul under the sense of that sin, and so makes it more serious than before, from thence shewing the corruption of nature, Rom. viii. 37.

Ninthly, and lastly, The Spirit causes us to continue in prayer from time to time, till we obtain a gracious answer; and so makes us pray perseveringly, Eph. vi. 18. The Lord may keep his people long hanging on for an answer, ere they get it. The promise may be big with the mercy prayed for, and yet it be not only many months but years ere it bring forth, as in the case of Abraham and David. This is a sore trial, and there would be no keeping from fainting, if the Spirit did not help our infirmity. But he helps to hang on,

1. By accounting for the delay of our answer, in a way consistent with God's honour and our good, and so satisfying us in that point, Psal. xxii. 2. 3. *O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* He helps to discern the unsoundness of the subtle reasonings of unbelief, tending to despondency; and so hinders from making rash conclusions, Psal. lxxvii.

10. *I said, This is my infirmity : but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* And so he keeps up in us kind thoughts of God's dispensations.

2. By strengthening faith and hope, which have the battle to fight in this case, Eph. iii. 16. Hangers on at the throne of grace may get a long stand, but they will get their strength renewed, Psal. xxvii. 13.

14. This the Spirit does, by shining anew on the promise ; adding other promises to it tending to the same scope ; giving some present experience and offallings from the Lord's hand, whereby the soul is refreshed in the time ; and helping to observe the signs of the approaching day, while yet the night continues.

3. *Lastly, Continuing and reviving on our spirits the sense of our need, which pinching us anew, obliges to renew our suit for relief, until the time we get it,* 2 Cor. xii. 8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* If in this case we were left to our own spirits, we would seek our help from another quarter, than hanging on about the Lord's hand, and our sense of need would wear off, and we would drop our petition. But the Spirit perfects what he begins, Psal. cxxxviii. ult. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

USE I. of information. This may let us see,

1. That men in this world are under the influence of that part of the other world, which they are in the road to. If ye are in the road to the happy part of the other world, ye are under the conduct and influence of the Holy Spirit, prompting and helping you to do your duty to God. Whence ye may gather, that they are in the road to destruction, who are under the conduct and influence of the spirit of the world, prompting and helping them to a course

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of sin. Consider the prevailing course of your lives, and trace it to the spring, and ye will find it is the spirit ye are acted by, 1 John iv. 4. One part of men is led by the Spirit of God, and they are holy, heavenly, and spiritual; another by the evil spirit, and they are unholy, hellish, and carnal. He is a spirit of covetousness in some, of uncleanness in others, &c.

2. Praying is another thing than men generally take it to be. It is not the exercise of a gift, but of grace; not a piece of a task laid on men, but a privilege they are advanced to; not a work to be done in our own strength, but by help from heaven; not a piece of the form of religion, but of experimental religion. Consider prayer in this scripture-view of it, and among many that bow their knees in prayer to God, there will be found few really praying persons; many whose hearts must say on what they have heard of it, Ezek. xx. 49. *Doth he not speak parables?*

3. True praying will always make people holy and humble; for the Spirit by which it is done, is the Spirit of holiness and light, Matth. iii. 11. Does a man value himself upon, and appear proud and conceited of himself on the account of his good praying? still continue in his profane, untender, unholy course? His prayers are his own, they are not by the help of the Spirit in him. God regards them not.

4. Great is the encouragement that poor sinners have to apply themselves to serious and spiritual praying. The weakest are left inexcuseable, if they neglect prayer still; and the formal professor, if he continue with his formal task-work of praying still. We have the Hearer of prayer to go to, the Father of our Lord Jesus, with our petitions; an Intercessor in heaven, to present them; and an Intercessor on earth, to draw them for us, and help us to make our petitions. This is the office of the Holy Spirit. Therefore,

USE II. Of exhortation. Set yourselves for pray-
B b 3 ing

ing in the Spirit, Eph. vi. 18. Prayerless persons, give yourselves to praying, and to this kind of praying. Praying persons, satisfy not yourselves without this kind of praying. Stand not still in the outer court of prayer, with hypocrites and formalists; come in to the inner court, with God's own children. Look for the help of the Spirit, employ the Spirit, in all your duties, and particularly your prayers. Remember that all the prayers are lost, that are not done in the Spirit.

I shall give you some advices, how to get the help of the Spirit in prayer.

1. Come to Christ in the way of believing the gospel. The fulness of the Spirit is lodged in Christ, Rev. iii. 1. He communicates the Spirit to dead sinners, 1 Cor. xv. 45. with John xx. 22. and this in the word of the gospel, Gal. iii. 2. It is vain to expect the help of the Spirit in prayer, till once we have received the Spirit to dwell in us, Eph. iii. 17. with 1 John iii. ult. To receive the word of the gospel as an ingrafted, quickening word, whereby we close with Christ for all, is the necessary foundation for all this.

2. Beware of maltreating the Spirit. And so,

(1) Resist not the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Do not stave off convictions, and awakenings out of a state or course of sin. Beware of sinning over the belly of light, and persisting in sin against calls to repentance. That is to resist the Spirit, and so to provoke him to leave you.

(2.) Quench not the Spirit, 1 Thess. v. 19. If this holy fire begin to burn at any time, so as you see the light and feel the heat of it, do not withdraw fuel from it, by neglecting the motions and operations of it, not taking care to cherish them: do not smother them, by not giving them vent in prayer: far less drown it out, by taking your swing in any sinful course, Luke xxi. 34. *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any*

any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.

(3.) Grieve not the Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. The Spirit is grieved by undervaluing his graces, comforts, influences, and his means of communicating them; by sins gross in their nature or aggravations, whereby the conscience is wasted and signally defiled, whereby some have quite withered away, the Spirit leaving them.

(4.) Vex not the Spirit, If. Ixiii. 10. Vex him not by your still relapsing into the same sins, Numb. xiv. 22. especially after convictions of the ill of them, confessions thereof, resolutions against them, and smarting for them. This is the great trial of the divine patience, whereby men are in hazard of being given up of God, Numb. xiv. 27.

(5.) Blaspheme not the Spirit in his operations, particularly praying in the Spirit. Take heed of making a mock of religion, preaching, praying, seriousness, talking slightingly of these things, and of making persons the objects of your derision and spite on these accounts. Sometime these things were only to be found among malignants and persecutors; but now they are to be found among people that pray themselves, and partake of the Lord's table. These Satan is training up for greater service, when such times shall come again. But take heed, it is a dangerous course, as these young blasphemers of the Spirit in his operations felt, 2 Kings ii. 23. 24. *As Elija was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head, Go up, thou bald-head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

3. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, Eph. v. 15. A loose and untender walk, wherein people let down their watch over the frame of their heart, and the course

course of their life in words and actions, provokes the Spirit to withdraw ; when a tender walk is followed with the tokens of his favour, John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

4. When ye go to prayer, be convinced of your absolute need of the Spirit. Look for him, and wait, and lay yourselves open to his influences, Luke xi. 13. Labour to revive that conviction at every occasion of prayer, and to keep it up throughout it. Look for the Spirit in the promise, believing it with application, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, &c.* Lay yourselves down at his feet, to be enlightened, quickened, &c, Jer. xxxi. 18. as one lays open himself to receive the fresh air.

5. Be habitually concerned for answers of prayer. They that are in good earnest to have their petitions granted, will be careful to have them right drawn : but they that are indifferent in the one, will be so in the other too, Psal. v. 3. *In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,* says David, *and will look up.* If ye be concerned for Christ's intercession for you in heaven, so will ye be for that of the Spirit in your own heart.

6. Let the Bible be dear to you, and look on it as God's word to you in particular; Rom. xv. 4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning : that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* Rev. iii. ult. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* The word is the vehicle wherein the Spirit is conveyed to us ; it is the channel of communication of his influences to us ; and the instrument he works by in us, in all the parts of his working in us, exciting, enlightening, &c. II. lxx. ult. *As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy*

thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

7. Be careful observers of providence, Psal. cvii.
ult. Who so is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. The Spirit is in these wheels; and the more people are set to observe their motions, the more they will readily get to observe. This is a way to carry you off formality in prayer, and give you an errand in good earnest to the throne of grace, whether in the way of petition, confession, or thanksgiving.

8. *Lastly,* Be watchful in prayer, Eph. vi. 18. The evil spirit watches against us at all times, and in a special manner the fowls come down on the carcases of our spiritual sacrifices. When ye sit down on your knees, the heart will be apt to fall a-wandering, and it will be much if before the end it do not give the slip. The Spirit of the Lord only can manage our spirits, and he will be provoked by our wanderings to withdraw. Therefore take that watchword, Prov. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.*

I shall now proceed to the last doctrine observable from the text.

DOCTR. V. *ult. The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly, causing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.*

In discoursing this point, I shall,

I. Consider the nature of these groanings caused by the Spirit in believers.

II. Shew how the Spirit makes intercession for believers with groanings.

III. In what respects these groanings are groanings that cannot be uttered.

IV. Conclude with two or three reflections.

I. We

I. We shall consider the nature of these groanings caused by the Spirit in believers. And here I shall shew,

1. Of what kind they are.

2. The moving causes of them.

FIRST, I am to shew of what kind these groanings are. There is a twofold groaning.

First, A natural groaning, the effect of pain, and any heavy pressure that lies on mens spirits, Jer. li. 52. Through all her land the wounded shall groan. This is common to men with beasts, Joel i. 18. How do the beasts groan? And men may groan so, without any gracious movings of heart towards God; therefore they are none of the groanings in the text, Job xxxv. 9. 10. By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, When is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?

Secondly, Spiritual and gracious groanings, whereby the gracious soul natively expresses its moving towards God under some heavy pressure, 2 Cor. i. 4. We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. These are they with which the Spirit helps believers, and which he causes in them. When men are in a swoon, they groan none; but when they are recovering, they will discover it by groaning; an argument that their sense and feeling is returned. So by these groanings believers are distinguished from the dead in sin.

These spiritual groanings of believers speak,

1. Their feeling of a weight and pressure upon them, 2 Cor. v. 4. above cited. Such is the imperfection of our state in this life, that if there is life in a soul, it must groan, because there is no escaping of pressures, from an evil world without, and an evil heart within. And the easy jovial life that men lead without these groanings, they owe it to spiritual death which has taken away their feeling, Eph. iv. 18. 19.

2. Their labouiring under these pressures, like one

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under a burden, Psal. vi. 6. *I am weary with my groaning, Heb. laboured to weariness in my groaning.* This imports,

(1.) An earnest endeavour to get them off, or to bear them while they are kept on. The new creature is surrounded with weights of various kinds, which in their own nature tend to hinder its growth, and coming to perfection: and there are mighty labours and workings of it against them, that it may get forward to its desired perfection, Phil. iii. 14.

(2.) Great difficulty in that labouring, so that the man is as it were out of breath wrestling with his burden, which natively issues in a groan, Eph. vi. 12. There is difficulty in the Christian life, that will try what metal men are of, and will put them to the exerting of their utmost vigour; and therefore it is compared to the exercise of wrestlers and runners.

3. The working of their affections under them; especially,

(1.) Grief of heart, Jer. xlvi. 3. Groaning is the natural expression of sorrow: and sighs, sobs, and groans, are what a heart pierced and weighed down with grief naturally vents itself in. Christ was *a man of sorrows*, and so we find him *groaning*, John xi. 38.; and true Christians, whatever their natural temper is, will be found to resound as an echo to a groaning Saviour.

Particularly, groans are the more heavy, when they arise from a double grief, a grief for such a thing, and a grief that it is beyond our power to help it: and of this sort mostly are the groans of believers, Rom. vii. 24.

(2.) Earnest desire of help and relief, 2 Cor. v. 2. Here the heart of the believer in these groanings moves directly towards God, with eyes lifted up to heaven. And hence these groanings are prayers in effect, and are so reckoned before God, Rom. viii. 27. Whence it appears how the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings, that helping to groan before the

the Lord, he helps to pray. These groanings may be considered two ways.

[1.] As they are joined with solemn prayer. When a Christian is seriously praying, and is so weighted, that his prayers are here and there interrupted with groanings; these groanings which the prayers are interspersed with, are in God's account parts of the prayer, and as acceptable parts as are in it all; whether they come in when a sentence is closed, or come in before it be perfected, Psal. vi. 3. *My soul is sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?* Men know not distinctly the meaning of such groans, but the Lord sees it as plain as if expressed by words.

[2.] As they are separate from solemn vocal prayer. And thus we may also consider them two ways.

1.) As they come in the room and stead of vocal prayer intended. I believe it is very possible, that a child of God may go to his knees to pray, and may rise again without having been able to speak a word, but only to groan: and though he thinks he could pray none at all, he is mistaken; as far as the Spirit helped him to groan, he helped him to pray, though none could understand that prayer of his but God himself, who searcheth the heart, Rom. viii. 27. As a full bottle does not orderly empty itself, so a heart may be too full to empty itself by words, but by groans, Psal. lxxvii. 4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*

2.) As they are without any design of solemn prayer. When a man is walking or sitting, musing on the sinfulness of his own heart and life, or on the wickedness that is done in the world, with the dis-honour that comes on the holy name of God thereby; till his heart swelling with grief natively vents itself in a groan: that groaning is in God's account a prayer, and a prayer that shall be heard at length, as proceeding from the influence of his own Spirit. What was it that set the wheel of providence in motion, to stop the wicked career the Egyptians were

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m, Exod. ii. 24. ? Why, God heard the groaning of the children of Israel.

SECONDLY, I come now to shew the moving causes of these groanings of believers. Believers, by the Spirit, have their groanings unto the Lord,

1. Under a pressure of trouble. While they are here, they cannot miss so much of a suffering lot, as will make them groan, Rom. viii. 18. 23.; and by the Spirit, these groans are directed towards God, as those of a child, under the difficulties of the way, are directed to his father.

(1.) Sometimes they are groaning to him under outward troubles. So Israel groaned under the Egyptian bondage, Exod. ii. 23. 24.; yea Christ himself, John xi. 33. 38. These are weights that press their spirits, make them to groan, and look upward for relief, Rom. viii. 23. longing for the day when they shall be beyond them.

(2) Sometimes they are groaning under inward troubles, Psal. xxx. 7. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* While here they are liable to spiritual deserts, wounds in their spirits under the apprehensions of the Lord's anger against them. And they groan out their case towards the hand that smites them. Both outward and inward troubles often meet together, as in the case of David, Psal. vi. 2. 3. 6. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears:* and in that of Job, chap. xxiii. 2. *Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.*

2. Under a pressure of temptations. These are a heavy weight to a gracious soul; they made Paul to go groaning to God again and again, 2 Cor. xii. 7. 8. Our Lord Christ had experience of an hour of the power of darkness, Luke xxii. 53. *When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against*

gainst me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. And his followers will not want experience of the same, wherein temptations come on thick and vigorous. These cause groanings,

(1.) Because of their disturbing the peace of the soul; they turn the calm into a storm, that the soul is tossed thereby as on a raging sea, which makes them cry, *Lead us not into temptation.*

(2.) Because of the difficulty of one's keeping his ground against them, Eph. vi. 12. 16. Every temptation has a friend within us, and mens nature is unto temptation as tinder to sparks of fire, apt to take fire; so that it requires hard wrestling to keep our ground.

(3.) Because of the danger of falling thereby into sin. Temptation is the precipice, and sin is the devouring gulf: and they who have a sense of their danger, no wonder they groan, groan under the pressure, and groan for relief.

3. Under the pressure of sin. This is a light burden to the most part of mankind, but it is the heaviest burden to a child of God, and causes in him, through the Spirit, the heaviest groans. For it is of all things the most contrary and opposite to the new nature in him, whence are these continued strugglings, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Many troubles Paul met with; but did any of them all ever cause in him such an exclamation as that, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* Now the children of God groan,

1st, Under the weight and pressure of their own sin, the sin of their nature, and the sin of their life, Psal. li. 3. 5. *I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.* It lies on them heavy as a body of death, while others being dead

dead in sin, it is no burden to them; no burden to their heart, though sometimes it may be to their conscience. And there are three things in their sin that press them sore.

(1.) The filthiness of it, that deformity that is in it, being the quite contrary of the holiness of God expressed in his law. The soul seeing the glory of the holiness of God, and how its sin is the very reverse of that glory; that fills it with shame, Ezra ix. 6. and self loathing, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Beholding itself in the glass of the pure and holy law, as a polluted and defiled creature, it groans under it as one pressed down to the earth with a burden, Jer. iii. ult. *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God.*

(2.) The prevailing power of it, Psal. lxxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me, Heb. have been mightier than I.* The new nature struggles against sin, Gal. v. 17. The new man of grace and the old man of sin are engaged in combat; and oft-times the old man prevails, and the new man is cast down. Now the believer taking part with grace against corruption, groans under this prevailing power of corruption (Rom. vii. 23. 24.) as an insupportable tyranny, that he longs to be rid of.

(3.) The guilt of it, Psal. li. 4. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* In the eyes of a believer, life lies in the favour of God, the shinings of his countenance: but their guilt binds them over to his anger, and overclouds his countenance. And that is a weight that makes them groan; that when it is removed, they rejoice as one that has got a burden taken off his back, Psal. xxxviii. 4. *Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* Compared with Hos. xiv. 2.—*Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

2dly, Under the weight and pressure of the sin of
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others, Ezek. ix. 4. *Go through the midst of the city through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.* As one cannot but loath an abominable thing on another as well as on himself; so sin, where-ever it appears on others, as well as on ourselves, will be a burden to a gracious soul, that will make it groan, Is. vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* Thus Lot was under a continued burden in Sodom, while he was among them, 2 Pet. ii. 7. 8. And none groan spiritually under their own sin that do not groan also under the sins of others amongst whom they live. There are three things in the sins of others that make them groan.

(1.) The dishonour to the holy name of God that is in them, Rom. ii. 23. 24. To see men trampling under foot the holy laws of God, and, by their profane courses, affronting the God that made them and walking after their own lusts, cannot but be a burden to any who truly love the Lord, and are concerned for the honour of his name, Psal. cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,* says David because they keep not thy law. Zeal for the honour of God, as it is native to his children; so, where it cannot prevail against sin, natively vents itself in groaning under the burden, Psal. lxix. 9.

(2.) The ruin to the sinner's own soul that is wrapped up in it, Jer. xiii. 17. There needs no prophetical eye but an eye of faith in the Lord's word, to foresee the ruin of those that go on impenitently in their sinful course, Rom. vi. 21. When sinners are fighting against God, by going on in their trespasses; it is easy to see whose head must be wounded in the encounter Psal. lxxviii. 21. and who must fall at length, however long they keep foot, Deut. xxxii. 35. Now the prospect of this is enough to make a gracious soul groan for those that cannot groan for themselves.

Psal. cxix. 119. 120. *Thou puttest away all the wickedness of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.* So Hab. iii. 16.

(3.) The hurt that is in it to others. It is Solomon's observation, that *one sinner destroyeth much good*, Eccl. ix. ult. And there is a wo pronounced on the world, because of offences, Matth. xvi. 7. Sin is a noxious vapour, spreading its infection over many; wounding some, and killing others; grieving to the godly, and hardening to the wicked. And a serious view of the mischief it does to others, beside the sinner himself, makes the godly groan.

From what is said, it appears that sin is the fundamental and chief cause of the believer's groaning. Troubles outward and inward rise from it, temptations lead to it. That is it within them, and that is it without them, that makes them groan. That is the burden to the Spirit of God, that grieves him, as one groaning under a burden, Amos ii. 13. If. i. 24. That is it that makes the whole creation groan, Rom. viii. 22. And it is that which makes the believer groan.

II. The second general head is to shew how the Spirit makes intercession for believers with groanings.

1. He works in them a spiritual feeling of their burdens, Rom. viii. 23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.* The time was, when they lay with the rest of the world, without sense or feeling of the burden on them, and he gave them life: and sometimes spiritual life in them has been so low, that they could have but little true feeling of their own case; and it was a burden to them to bestir themselves to rid themselves, Cant. v. 3. *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* But the Spirit excites grace, and gives them a lively feeling of

their spiritual case, ver. 4. *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

2. He gives them a view of the free and unburdened state, wherein mortality is swallowed up of life, 2 Cor. v. 4. There is such a state, it is represented in the word of truth. The Spirit strengthens the eye of faith, whereby the soul sees it clearly, though afar off; a state wherein there is an eternal putting off of the burden of trouble, temptation, and sin.

3. He excites in them ardent desires of riddance from their burden, and of arriving at the unburdened state, 2 Cor. v. 2. *For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.* Rom. viii. 23. *Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* What ardent desire of deliverance would a man have, who were kept lying among dead corpses, rotting and sending forth their stench into his nostrils? Such ardent desire will a Christian have, when through the Spirit grace is put in lively and vigorous exercise, while the dead world without him, and the body of death within him, conspire to annoy him with their favour of death, Rom. vii. 24. Hence,

4. He engages them in earnest wrestling with their burden, in order to get clear of it, that the new creature of grace may get up its back, and run the way of God's commandments, Gal. v. 17. Here grace has a mighty struggle with its enemy, longing and panting for the victory, and pressing towards a state of perfection, Phil. iii. 14.

5. *Lastly,* Finding themselves still entangled with their burden, notwithstanding of all their wrestling, he helps them to groan out their case before the Lord, as a case that is beyond their reach to help, Rom. vii. 23. 24. *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from*

the body of this death! But the groaning through the Spirit's aid is not groaning and dying, but,

(1.) Groaning and looking to the Lord for help, Psal. cxxiii. 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* The believer groans and looks upward to God for relief. His burden of trouble, he will lie under it, till the Lord take it off, and will not take any sinistrous course for his deliverance, Is. xxviii. 16. *He that believeth, shall not make haste.* The burden of sin, he is never to be reconciled with that, but however long he wrestles with it without the desired success, he will ever be looking and longing for deliverance, Phil. iii. 13. 14.

(2.) Groaning and waiting for relief, Rom. viii. 23. Unbelief makes one to groan and despair of deliverance, either in temporals or spirituals, Jer. ii. 25. But the Spirit makes the believer to groan and wait in hope, Gal. v. 5. Though the eyes fail while they wait for their God, yet still they will wait in hope of the promise, Luke xviii. 1.

III. I come now to shew in what respects these groanings are groanings that cannot be uttered.

1. The working of their affections, thus set in motion by the Spirit, is sometimes such as stops the course of the words. This is often seen in the workings of natural affections, how that either joy or grief filling the heart, mars the ordinary course of words; the heart being too full, to be vented easily in expression. It is not then to be thought strange, that it so falls out in the case of spiritual affections put in mighty motion by the Spirit. Yea they do,

(1.) Sometimes interrupt the expression, and the groaning fills up what is wanting in the words, Psal. vi. 3. Even as a hurt and pained child tells his case to his mother, in imperfect expressions, filling up the want with tears, sighs, and sobs; so that she may have difficulty to understand what ails him: But our Father in heaven has no difficulty in coming at the meaning

meaning of his children so expressed, Rom. viii. 27. *He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.* Our elder Brother sometimes spoke by broken sentences from the same cause, Luke xix. 41. 42. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* So Gen. iii. 22.

(2.) Sometimes stop the expression altogether, like as a multitude of people rushing all together to a door, they all stick, and none can get out, Psal. lxxvii. 4. *I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* So a child of God may go to prayer, and not be able to speak a word. But let them go to their knees before the Lord for all that; and if they cannot speak a word, let them groan their case before the Lord. That is a proper way of praying in the Spirit, and God will certainly hear and accept that kind of praying, though there be nothing but groaning in it. Do ye put away dumb people without an alms, because they cannot speak? are ye not more moved with their sighs and humming noise, than with the cries of common beggars? Do not the sighs and sobs of your frightened or hurt children move you more, than their complaints formed in words? And do ye think that God will disregard the groans and sighs of his people, when they cannot speak a word to him? No, surely; he will hear the groaning of the prisoner, Psal. cii. 20.

2. What they feel and see in this case, by the Spirit, is always beyond what they can express in words. I own that what a child of God sometimes feels and sees in prayer, is so small, that their words may sufficiently express it: but when the Spirit helpeth them to these groanings, it is quite otherwise, their words cannot come up to their affections. When the Spirit gives a Christian an experimental feeling of the burden of sin, realizes to him the glory of the unburdened state, and makes him groan between the two,

there

there is something there that is truly unspeakable. As the gift of Christ is unspeakable to those who truly see it, 2 Cor. ix. 15. and the joy in the Holy Ghost to those that feel it, 1 Pet. i. 8. so are the groanings by the Spirit unutterable to the groaners.

I conclude with two or three reflections.

1. God's people are a groaning people. For they have the Spirit of Christ, and he makes intercession for them with groanings: they have put on Christ, and he was a groaner. And those that are strangers to these groanings, their groaning time is coming; walking now in the vanity of your minds, will make eternal groaning.

Ques. How are God's people regarded when they get leave to groan on? *Ans.* They must abide the trial of their graces, and be conformed to the image of a groaning Saviour. In due time their burden will be taken off, and they will groan no more.

2. Prayer is a business of great weight and seriousness. It is one thing to say a prayer, another thing to pray indeed acceptably. Wherefore from this, and all that has been said,

3. *Lastly*, Learn to pray by the help of the Spirit, for no other praying is acceptable to God: look to him in all your addresses to the throne, and depend upon his guiding and influence; that through Christ Jesus, ye may have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Eph. ii. 18.

Of

Of praying in the Name of Jesus Christ.

The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick
in the year 1728.

JOHN xvi. 23.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

OUR Lord Jesus is here comforting his disciples under the want of his bodily presence which they had so long enjoyed, shewing them that it should be well made up to them. They should see him again after his resurrection, though not to return to that familiarity with them as before ; they should see him by the Spirit, in his exalted state ; and should find God so reconciled to them by his sacrifice of himself, that they should have a boldness of access to the throne in heaven, which they had not before ; that in that day they should ask him nothing in that manner they used while he was with them in the days of his flesh ; but in a manner more to his honour and their comfort. Here he declares,

1. What that manner is, and that in two things. (1.) They should apply themselves, in asking or petitioning, directly to the Father as their God and Father allowing them access to him, for the supply of all their needs. (2.) They should apply to him in the name of the Son, the exalted Redeemer, expressly, seeing more clearly the way of sinners treating with God through the Mediator, than either the Jewish church had done, or they themselves while they had his bodily presence with them.

2. The success of that manner of applying to God.

It

It should be successful in all points. Whatsoever, in spiritual or temporal things, they should petition the Father in the name of Christ, he should give it them for his sake.

The following doctrine arises from the words.

Doct. *Whoever would pray to God acceptably, must pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ.*

In treating this point, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

II. Give the reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. I am to shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. That this takes in whatever is necessary in prayer, both as to matter and manner, is evident from the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, &c.* And no man can thus pray, but by the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Negatively, It is not a bare mentioning his name, in prayer, and concluding our prayers therewith, Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* We must begin, carry on, and conclude our prayers in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* The saints use the words, *through Jesus Christ our Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 57.; but the virtue is not in the words, but in the faith wherewith they are used. But alas! these are often produced as an empty scabbard, while the sword is away.

Positively, we may take it up in these four things.

FIRST, We must go to God at Christ's command, and by order from him. This is the import of the phrase *in his name,* Matth. xviii. 20. *Where two*

two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. If a poor body can get a recommendation from a friend to one that is able to help him, he comes with confidence and tells, Such a one has sent me to you. Our Lord Christ is the friend of poor sinners, and he sends them to his Father to ask supply of their wants; and allows them to tell that he sent them, John xvi. 24. And coming that way, in faith, they will not be refused. This implies,

1. The soul's being come to Christ in the first place, John xv. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Sense of need brings the soul to Christ, as the poor man's friend, who has the favour of the court of heaven, that through his means the soul may get its wants supplied there. See Acts xii. 20. We must first come to Christ by faith, ere we can make one acceptable prayer to God.

2. That however believers in Christ are relieved of the burden of total indigence, John iv. 14. yet while they are in the world, they are still compassed with wants. God will have them to live from hand to mouth, and so to honour him by hanging on daily about his hand for their supply from time to time. In heaven they shall be set down at the fountain; but now the law of the house is, *Ask, and ye shall receive*, Matth. vii. 7.

3. That Christ sends his people to God by prayer, for the supply of their wants. This he does by his word, commanding them to go, and by his Spirit inclining them to go. For thus the whole Trinity is glorified by the praying believers, the Father as the Hearer of prayer, the Son as the Advocate and Intercessor presenting their prayers to the Father, and the Spirit as the Author of their prayers, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

4. That acceptable prayer is performed under the sense

sense of the command of a God in Christ, If. xxxiii.
22. *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.* Men may pray, though not acceptably, with little or no sense of the command of God on their consciences; that is not serving God, but themselves. They may pray under the sense of the command of an absolute God out of Christ; that is but slavish service to God. But the believer has the sense of the command, as from Jesus Christ, where majesty and mercy are mixed in it; and that is son-like service.

5. *Lastly,* That the acceptable petitioner's encouragement to pray is from Jesus Christ, Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. It is Christ's token that he has given them to carry with them, that affords them all their confidence with God: that is the promises of the covenant sealed with his own blood. Faith laying hold on these, carries them as Christ's token to the Father, upon which a poor criminal may expect to find acceptance and supply.

SECONDLY, We must pray for Christ's sake, as our motive to the duty. This also is imported in the phrase, *in his name*, Mark ix. 41. *Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because he belong to Christ,—he shall not lose his reward.* As we must be influenced by his command, as the reason of our praying, so with regard to him as our motive. As there is no coming to God but by him; so there is no kindly drawing of us to God, but by the allurement of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Any other sight of the glory of God would fright the sinner away from him, as from

a consuming fire. So we must behold God in Christ, and go to him as the object of our love and adoration. This implies,

1. An high esteem of Christ in the acceptable petitioner, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you which believe, he is precious.* No man's prayer will be acceptable to God, who wants a transcendent esteem of the Lord Christ; for God is honoured in his Son, John v. 23. And the more the esteem of Christ has place in one's heart, the more, it will be found, he will give himself to prayer.

2. Complying with the duty out of love to Christ, Heb. vi. 10. *God is no unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.* The soul must discern Christ's stamp on every duty, and so embrace it for his sake. The duty of prayer some embrace and use, because of the usefulness of it to themselves; but God's children embrace it for the sake of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14. *For the love of Christ constraineth us.* Love natively leads to desire communion with the party beloved: and love to Christ recommends prayer to a holy heart, as a means of communion with God in Christ.

3. Complying with the duty out of respect to his honour and glory, Phil. i. 21. *For to me to live is Christ.* Christ humbled himself, and therefore the Father has glorified him, chap. ii. 9. 10. 11. And every act of praying in his name glorifies him, being an acknowledgement before God of the unspeakable dignity of his merit and intercession, as procuring that access for sinners unto God, that no other way could have been obtained.

4. *Lastly,* Doing it with heart and good-will: for what is done for Christ's sake by a gracious soul must needs be so done, Is. lxiv. 5. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.* One praying indeed in the name of Christ, is acted by a principle of love to him, which oiling the wheels of the soul, sets all in motion, so that the heart is poured out like water before

fore the Lord. And where that principle is wanting, there is an acting by constraint.

THIRDLY, We must in praying to God act in the strength of Christ. This also is imported in the phrase, Luke x. 17. *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.* So Zech. x. ult. *I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name.* We must go to prayer, as David went against Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. *I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.* And here consider,

1. What this presupposes.

2. Wherein it lies.

FIRST, Let us consider what this acting in prayer in the strength of Christ presupposes. It presupposes,

1. That praying acceptably is a work quite beyond any power in us, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.* The want of this persuasion mars many a prayer, and makes many a rash and inconsiderate approach unto God. To manage aright an address to God on his throne of glory, cannot miss to appear such a work in the eyes of all, who have due thoughts of God's majesty, or of their own ignorance and weakness.

2. That there is a stock of grace and strength in Jesus Christ, for our help, as to other duties, so for this duty of prayer, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* Man at first had his stock of grace in his own hand, and he made a sad account of it. Now the Lord has lodged it in the Mediator, as the head of believers, Col. i. 19. *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* In him there is not only a fulness of sufficiency for himself, but of abundance for his people, as of water in a fountain, or of sap in the stock of a tree, John iii. 34. *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

3. Sinners are welcome to partake of this stock of grace and strength in Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 1. For it is lodged in him as a storehouse, to be communicated.

The fountain stands open, and whosoever will may come and take, Zech. xiii. 1. They are very welcome: as it is an ease and pleasure for the mother to have the full breast sucked by her babe, so it is a pleasure to Christ to communicate of his fulness, If. lvi. 12. 13. *For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

4. We must be united to Christ, as members to the head, and branches to the vine, if we would act in prayer or any other duty, in the strength of Christ, John xv. 5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.* We cannot partake of the stock of grace and strength for duty in Christ, without partaking of himself, Rom. viii. 32. As the soul in a separate state doth not quicken the body, so the soul not united to Christ cannot be fitted for duty by strength derived from him. The graft must knit with the stock, ere it can partake of the sap.

SECONDLY, I am to shew wherein acting in prayer in the strength of Christ lies. It lies in two things.

1. The soul's going out of itself for strength to the duty; that is, renouncing all confidence in itself for the right management of it, 2 Cor. iii. 5. forecited. Every duty is to be undertaken, begun, and carried on, under a sense of utter weakness and insufficiency for it in ourselves.

(1.) Gifts are not to be trusted to, Prov. iii. 5. That is the way to get gifts blasted, for they are but an arm of flesh, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. And 'though ye should have the free exercise of your gift; yet a bare gift can never make a man do a duty graciously. The work will still be but a dead work, without the life of grace derived from Christ the Lord of life.

(2.) Nay

(2.) Nay grace received and implanted in us is not to be trusted to for this end. Learn ye, that even of our gracious selves we can do nothing, 2 Cor. iii. 4. 5. There must be continued supplies of grace from Christ unto us, else we will bring forth no fruit, John xv. 5. It is true, grace is a seed that in its nature tends to fruit: but what will come of the seed, if the showers, and dew, and heat of the sun be with held?

2. The soul's going to Christ for strength to duty, by trusting on him for it, If xxvi. 4. *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* This is the exercising of faith, by which the saints live, Gal. ii. 20. and derive grace and strength from Christ their head, John i. 16. Faith is that grace by which the weak soul fetches in strength and grace from the fountain of it in Christ. So he prays in the name of Christ, in this respect, who goes about the duty in confidence of, and trusting in Christ for, strength and ability to manage it acceptably, Psal. lxxi. 16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* To make this more plain, consider,

(1.) By faith a Christian sees, in the glass of the word, an utter inability for duty in himself, believing, on the testimony of the word, that of himself he is unable to work any good work, If xxvi. 12.; nay not to begin it well, Phil. i. 6. to will it, chap. ii. 13. nor so much as to think it, 2 Cor. iii. 5. In all which the Christian's faith is strengthened by experience.

(2.) By faith he sees also a fulness of grace and strength treasured up in Christ the head, to be communicated to the members of his body, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* And he beholds the promises he has made of it, as the conduit pipes by which it is conveyed unto them, 2 Pet. i. 4. *Whereby are given unto*

us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. These things the Christian believes on the testimony of the same word of God: and thus he sees a sufficiency to oppose to his own emptiness, and a fulness of strength to remedy his own weakness.

(3.) By faith he trusts that this fulness in Christ shall be made forthcoming to him, in a measure of it, for the duty, according to the promise, Psal. xviii. 2. *The Lord is—my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.* Hab. iii. 19. *The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.* Thus there is a particular application in faith, that the Christian trusts in the word of promise, that grace and strength shall be given to him. So the word holds it out for particular application by faith, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee; and this is the way to bring in strength,* as the Psalmist's experience testifies, Psal. xxviii. 7. *The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped:* and so the promise secures it, Jer. xvii. 7. 8. *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.* For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Take away that trust, that particular application, the soul is left helpless, having nothing to gripe to, and the communication of strength is blocked up; according to what the apostle James says, chap. i. 6. 7. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed.* For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

FOURTHLY, We must in praying to God pray for Christ's sake, as the only procuring cause of the success of our prayers, Dan. ix. 17. Now therefore,

O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. Going to God in prayer, we must as it were put off our own persons, as not worth noticing in the sight of God, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ ; come and receive the blessing in the elder Brother's cloaths, having all our hope from the Lord's looking on the face of his Anointed. This is the main thing in the text, a relying on the Lord Jesus for the success of our prayers in heaven. Here I shall shew,

1. What is presupposed in this.
2. Wherein it consists.

FIRST, I am to shew what is presupposed in praying to God for Christ's sake. It presupposes,

1. That sinners in themselves are quite unacceptable in heaven, even in their religious duties. Not only are the wicked so, Prov. xv. 8. ; but even the saints considered in themselves, If. lxiv. 6. The reason is plain, God is holy, we are impure and defiled. There is such a rank smell of sinful pollution about us, that the opening of a sinner's mouth in prayer is like the opening of an unripe grave, Rom. iii. 13. It is too strong, that we cannot sweeten ourselves. The loathsome favour of the sins about the best, cannot be mastered by any sweet favour of their duties, but only by the sweet favour of the sacrifice of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15. with Eph. v. 2.^a

2. Christ is most acceptable there ; he is the darling of heaven, the prime favourite there, Matth. iii. ult. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* He is acceptable there as God, the only begotten of the Father from eternity : but that is not it. He is acceptable as God-man, Mediator, who has in our flesh fulfilled his Father's will, by his obedience and death, Eph. v. 2. *Christ—hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.* And he is acceptable to the Father,

(1.) In himself, Matth. iii. ult. above cited. The Father

Father is well pleased with his person, and delights in him, as the brightness of his own glory, and his own express image. He is well pleased with his undertaking the work of our redemption, and his management of that work: he is pleased with his holy birth, righteous life, and complete satisfaction; so pleased with his humbling himself, that he has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9.

(2.) He is so well pleased with him, that he accepts sinners for his sake, Eph. i. 6. *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* For his sake rebel-sinners are accepted to peace and favour, criminals to eternal life, their performances mixed with much sinful imperfections, are accepted as pleasing in his sight. The sweet smell of his sacrifice so masters the rank favour of sin about them, that they are for his sake brought into his presence and made near. The Father knows not to refuse him any request, John xi. 42. *I knew that thou hearest me always.*

3. Sinners are warranted to come to the throne of grace in his name, Heb. iv. 15. :6. *We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. It is sinners of mankind, not of the angel-tribe, chap. ii. 16. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Whatever be our case, he will do for us to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. He is an Advocate that will take our most desperate causes in hand, carry them through, and that in a way agreeable to justice, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The petitions put in his hand cannot miscarry.

SECONDLY, I am now to shew wherein this praying to God for Christ's sake consists. And,

First, In general, it consists in our relying on the

Lord

Lord Jesus only, for the success of our prayers in heaven. And,

1. Consider what we are in this matter to rely on him only for.

(1.) We are to rely on him only, for access to God in our prayers, Eph. iii. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.* In vain do we pray, if we get no access to the prayer-hearing God: and there is no access to him, but through Christ, John xiv. 6. Whoever attempt to draw near to God otherwise, will get the door of heaven cast on their face: but we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is Heaven's favourite and the sinner's friend.

(2.) For acceptance of our prayers, Eph. i. 6. forecited. Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift, Heb. xiii. 10. 15. If we lay the stress of our acceptance on any person or thing, but Jesus Christ the crucified Saviour, we cannot be accepted. For our best duties being mixed with sinful imperfections, cannot be accepted of a holy God but through a Mediator; and there is no Mediator but he, 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(3.) For the gracious answer of prayer in granting our petitions. So the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* We have forfeited all other pleas for Heaven's favours, by Adam's fall. And now no prayers can be heard and answered in heaven; but for Christ the second Adam's sake. A sinner cannot have the least favourable glance from the throne of God, but what is given for Christ's sake. What men get otherwise, they get with a vengeance, an impression of wrath on it, Hos. xiii. 11. Psal. lxxviii. 29.

2. Consider how we are to eye Christ as the object of this reliance. We are to eye him in it as our great High Priest, Heb. iv. 15. 16. forecited. A believer is to eye Christ in his prayers, in all his offices. We are to eye him as our Prophet, teaching us by his Spirit

Spirit how and what to pray for ; as our King, having the office of distributing Heaven's favours to poor sinners : but in point of our access, acceptance, and hearing, we are to eye him as a Priest ; for it is in that office only we can find what to rely on before God, for these ends. And here we find,

(1.) The infinite merit of his sacrifice to rely on, Rom. iii. 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* Man by sin lost himself, and all Heaven's favours from the greatest to the least, from heaven's happiness to the least drop of water to refresh him. Accordingly Christ redeeming sinners by his blood, paid the ransom not only for their persons, but for all Heaven's favours to them, from the greatest to the least. Therefore he says, *Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,* If. iv. 3. He bought their seat in heaven, their peace, and pardon, yea and their seat on earth, their bread, and their water, If. xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high : his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* Now would we pray in his name ?

Then in prayer eye Christ on the cross, bleeding dying, and by his bloody death and sufferings paying for the mercy thou art seeking. Is it a spiritual mercy, or a temporal mercy ? It is a purchased mercy, the purchase of the blood of Christ ; seek it of God as such, as the purchase of the blood of Jesus.

(2.) His never-failing intercession to rely on, Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Our great High Priest having offered his sacrifice on earth, is now gone into the heavens, presenting there the blood of his sacrifice in the infinite merit thereof before his Father ; that he may obtain the purchased mercies for his people. So that the supply of the needs of

his people, is his business in heaven, as well as it is theirs on earth. And he offers their prayers to his Father, Rev. viii. 4. Therefore if ye would pray in his name,

In prayer eye Christ as your Intercessor at the right hand of God, Rom. viii. 34. If the price of his blood was extended to the purchasing of all the mercies we need; surely his intercession extends from the greatest to the least of them also. And therefore we need not stick to put our petitions for any mercy we need, in his hand. Hence it may appear,

Secondly, More particularly, wherein praying in the name of Christ, and for his sake, consists.

1. Renouncing all merit and worth in ourselves, in point of access, acceptance, and gracious answer, saying with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.* If we stand on personal worth, from the consideration of our doings or sufferings, or any thing in or about ourselves, we pray in our own name, and will speed accordingly. Self-denial is absolutely necessary to this kind of praying, that stopping our eyes to all excellencies in ourselves or duties, we may betake ourselves to free grace only.

2. Believing that however great the mercies are, and however unworthy we are, yet we may obtain them from God through Jesus Christ, Heb. iv. 15.

16. There can be no praying in faith without this. If we do not believe this, we dishonour his name, whether our unbelief of it arise from the greatness of the mercy needed, or from our own unworthiness, or both. For nothing can be beyond the reach of his infinite merit and never-failing intercession.

3. Seeking in prayer the mercies we need of God, for Christ's sake accordingly. So we present our petitions *in his name*, John xvi. 24. We are to be ashamed before God in prayer, ashamed of ourselves, but not ashamed to beg in the name of his Son. Our holy

holy shame respects our unworthiness: but Christ's merit and intercession are set before us, as a ground of confidence.

4. Pleading on his merit and intercession, Psal. Ixxxiv. 9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.* We are not only to seek, but to plead in prayer, as needy petitioners whose pinching necessity makes them fill their mouths with arguments. Job xxiii. 3. 4. Christ's merit and intercession is the fountain of these arguments; and to plead on mere mercy, mercy for mere mercy's sake, is too weak a plea. But faith founding its plea on Christ's merit, urges God's covenant and promise made thereupon, Psal. Ixxxiv. 20. his glorious perfections shining in the face of Jesus, the honour of his name manifested in Christ.

5. Lastly, Trusting that we shall obtain a gracious answer for his sake, Mark xi. 24. *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* The soul praying according to the will of God, is to exercise a faith of particular confidence in God through Christ, which is not only warrantable, but necessary, Jam. i. 6. 7. This glorifies the Mediator, and glorifies the faithfulness of God in the promise: and the want of it casts dishonour on both.

II. The second general head is, to give reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ. I offer the following.

1. Because sinners can have no access to God without a Mediator, and there is no other Mediator but he, Is. lix. 2. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Innocent Adam might have come to God immediately in prayer, and been accepted; for while there was no sin, there was no need of a Mediator. But now the justice of God bars the access of sinners to him; and there is none to mediate a peace betwixt God and the sinner but Christ, John xiv. 6.

2. Because

2. Because the promises of the covenant were all made to Jesus Christ, as the party who fulfilled the condition of the covenant, Gal. iii. 16. The promises are the measure of acceptable prayer: what God has not promised, we cannot warrantably pray for. In prayer we come to God to claim the promises: and we cannot claim them, but in the right of Christ the head of the covenant, to whom they were made; that is to say, we cannot pray acceptably but in his name.

3. Because our praying in the name of Christ, is a part of the reward of Christ's voluntary humiliation for God's glory and the salvation of sinners, Phil. ii. 9. 10. He gave his life a ransom for sinners, and a price of redemption of their forfeited mercies: therefore God has statuted and ordained, that sinners shall crave and receive all their mercies in his name, that they shall kneel in him to receive the blessing, as his members.

4. Because it is not consistent with the honour of God, to give sinners a favourable hearing otherwife, John ix. 31. with 2 Cor. v. 19. 21. Where is the honour of God's justice, if Heaven's favours be bestowed on sinners otherwise than on the account of a satisfaction?—the honour of his holiness, if they may have communion with him as they are in themselves?—of his law, if they may get their petitions of mercy answered, but in the name of one who has answered its demands? They dishonour God, his Son, and his mercies, that ask any thing but in the name of Christ.

5. Nothing can favour with God, that comes from a sinner, but what is perfumed with the merit and intercession of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15. Eph. i. 6. It is not the inward excellency of the prayers of the saints, that makes them acceptable in God's sight; but the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith on the praying saint praying in faith, Heb. xi. 4. The merit of his righteousness, presented in his intercession, with

the prayer, makes it acceptable, Rev. viii. 4. It favours in heaven out of his mouth.

6. *Lastly*, The stated way of all gracious communication between heaven and earth, is through Jesus Christ, who opened a communication between them by his blood, when it was blocked up by the breach of the first covenant, John xiv. 6. Whatever favour is conveyed to us from heaven in a way of grace and love, whatever we offer to God in a way of duty or desire, must go through him. This was represented in Jacob's ladder, Gen. xxviii. If we would come to God, or present a petition to him, it must be through Christ, Heb. x. 19. 20. If the Lord comes to us, or sends us a gracious answer, it is through him, 2 Cor. v. 19.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

USE I. of information. From this doctrine we learn,

1. What a holy God we have to do with in prayer, who hath said, *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified*, Lev. x. 3. He sits on his throne of majesty, and we can have no access to him, being sinners, but through Christ. His very throne of grace, from which he breathes love and good-will to sinners, is founded on justice and judgement, Psal lxxxix. 14. We must come to him under the covert of the Mediator's broad righteousness and efficacious blood; otherwise we cannot stand before his spotless holiness.

2. Let us prize the love of Christ, in making an entrance for us into the holy place, through the veil of his flesh, Heb. x. 20. The flaming sword of justice, which guarded the way to the tree of life, was bathed in his blood, to procure us access to God. He bought again the estate that Adam forfeited for us, and he bought it with his precious blood; that since we could not have it again in our own name, we might have it in his.

3. There

3. There can be no acceptable praying to God but by believers united to Christ, having on the garment of his righteousness, John ix. 31. *God-heareth not sinners.* An unregenerate man, living in his natural state, may pray; but can never pray acceptably, while in that state: for he cannot pray in the name of Christ, which is not the work of the tongue using these words, but the work of the heart by faith relying on Christ, his merit and intercession.

4. Even believers cannot pray in the name of Christ, and so not acceptably, without faith in exercise. It is not enough for this end, that one have faith in the root and principle; but faith must be exercised in every duty, Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh,* says Paul, *I live by the faith of the Son of God.* It is as necessary to every acceptable performance, as breathing to the common actions of life, John xv. 5.

5. *Lastly,* We have great need not to be rash in our approaches to God in prayer, but that we prepare our hearts and compose them beforehand for such a solemn duty, Eccl. v. 1. We should beware lest custom in these things, and particularly in the more frequent and less solemn approaches to God in prayer, at our meals, turn us to formality; but should labour to impress our hearts with the holiness of God, the necessity of a Mediator, and stir up grace in our hearts.

USE II. of reproof to all those who approach unto God in prayer, otherwise than by and in the name of Jesus Christ. The idolatrous Papists allow other mediators of intercession, besides the one only Mediator; and pray to, employ, and rely on saints and angels, to intercede in heaven for them, though religious worshipping of the creature is directly forbidden, Matth. iv. 10. and angel-worship, Rev. xix. 10. and the saints departed are not acquainted with our particular cases, Is. lxiii. 16. But those also among us are to be reproved, as approaching to God in prayer otherwise than in Christ's name,

1. Who make approach unto God in prayer, as an absolute God, without consideration of the Mediator. This is the effect of the natural blindness and ignorance of mens minds; not knowing God, nor discerning the flaming sword of justice guarding the tree of life, they rush forward on the point thereof to pull the fruits. Let such consider their dangerous rashness, and reform, Heb. xiii. ult. *For our God is a consuming fire*; knowing they can never worship God acceptably in that way, John v. 23. *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.* Hence the knowledge and belief of the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all acceptable worship, without which it cannot subsist, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father;* and the Christian church is thereby distinguished from the rejected Jews, 1 Thess i. 1. and it must be practically improved in every piece of true worship.

2. Those who, in their approaches to God, put other things in the room of the Mediator, or join other things with him. For as there is no access to God without a Mediator, so there is none but by the one Mediator only, John xiv. 6. *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* But who do that? Even all those who in their approaches by prayer, lay the stress of their access and acceptance with God, in whole or in part, on any thing but Christ. Whatever thou reliest on for these ends, besides Christ, has his room, and so mars the duty, Phil. iii. 3. and provokes God, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. There is a bias in the hearts of the best this way.

There are four things which men are apt to put thus in the room of Christ, in whole or in part,

(1.) Their own worth, in respect of their qualifications and good things done by them, Judg. xvii. ult. This the proud Pharisee relied on in his approach Luke xviii. 11. 12. *God, I thank thee, says he, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers,*

dulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. So proud and conceited professors go to their prayers, and with their money in their hand miss the opened market of free grace. They say they beg for Christ's sake, but yet in reality they have more expectation from their own personal worth, than from the merit of Christ's blood. Their want of a humbling work of the Spirit raises the value they have for themselves; and the want of saving illumination sinks the value of Christ's merit with them.

(2.) The mercy of an unatoned God, that is, mercy considered in God without a view to the satisfaction of his justice by the Mediator. This the ignorant and profane are apt to stumble on, whose eyes are open to the mercy of God, but blind to his justice, which therefore they are in no concern about the satisfaction of. It never enters into their hearts, to question, how it is consistent with the honour and justice of God to accept them? but the notion they have framed of the mercy of God answers all their difficulties. Howbeit, no such mercy is proposed to sinners in the gospel, If. xxvii. 11. Psal. lxxxv. 10. It is true, it was a good prayer of the publican, Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful to me a sinner:* but his words bear an eye to mercy through a propitiation: and so was the mercy of God held forth to the Old-Testament church in the mercy-seat, as well as to the New.

(3.) The manner of their performing the duty itself. Great weight is laid here, as if a well-said prayer were sufficient to recommend itself and the petitioner too. Cain laid such weight on his sacrifice, Gen. iv. 4. 5. A flush of affections and seeming tenderness, in prayer, is in the eyes of many a prayer that cannot be rejected, If. lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflict-ed our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* Enlarge-ment in duty raises the value of it so in their own

eyes, that they cannot think but it must be valuable in the eyes of God too. So in the earnestness of the prayer, and many words used, Matth. vi. 7. Let men examine their expectations, and they will be fair to find more weight laid there than on the merit of Christ, though this only can bear weight.

(4.) Their own necessity, Hos. vii. 14. *They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds : they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.* Sense of need is a necessary qualification in acceptable prayer: but pinching necessity, where the heart is unhumbled, is apt to be set in a room higher than becomes it, as if of itself it were a sufficient plea. When it is thus abused, may be known by this, That on the not hearing of the prayer, the heart riseth against God: A sign that the petitioner is not as a needy beggar craving an alms, but a needy creditor craving his own. Our necessity should quicken us to seek, but it is the merit and intercession of Christ alone that is to be relied on for our access.

USE III. Wherefore rely on Christ, and on him only, for access to God in, and acceptance of, your prayers; that is, Pray in the name of Christ.

Mot. 1. In this way of praying ye may obtain any thing ye really need. So says the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* There is no mercy so great, nor any sinner so unworthy, but he may have it, coming to God this way, Heb. vii. 25. with John xi. 42. God can bestow it in that way with the safety of his honour, the sinner may confidently expect it on good grounds. For Christ's merit is infinite, his intercession always prevalent.

2. There is no access to God, nor acceptance of prayer another way, John xiv. 6. It is through him our persons can be accepted, Eph. i. 6. and through him our duties can be so, Heb. xi. 4. Every sacrifice not offered on this altar, however valuable it seems,

seems, will be rejected. There is no return of prayer in a gracious manner otherwise.

I conclude with giving you a few directions for praying in the name of Christ.

1. Labour to impress your hearts with a sense of the spotless holiness and exact justice of God, Psal. lxxxix. 7. This will shew the necessity of a Mediator to interpose, as in Israel's case.

2. Be sensible of your need of, and look for, the help of the Spirit in every approach, Rom. viii. 26. As the sending of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's merit and intercession; so the Spirit being come leads back to the Mediator, Eph. ii. 18.

3. Shake off all confidence in yourselves, and see your utter unworthiness of the least mercies, how great soever your need of them be, Gen. xxxii. 10. As Jacob put off his own raiment to put on his elder brother's for the blessing, so do ye cast off your own filthy rags, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Satisfy not yourselves with bare seeking for Christ's sake; that is not enough: but be confident that ye shall get access, acceptance, and a gracious return for his sake, Mark xi. 24. Raise a believing expectation in him.

Quest. How may one reach that? *Ans.* (1.) By a believing view of Christ on the cross purchasing, and at the Father's right hand interceding for, our mercies, and particularly eying his sufferings, agreeable to your wants, as in the case of your want of light, the darkness came on him; in the case of your want of bread, his hunger, &c. (2.) By a believing application of the promises suitable to your needs. (3.) Considering this as God's ordinance for communication between heaven and earth, Gal. iii. 8.

5. *Lastly,* Watch against your hearts going off to any confidence in the duty itself: for that is to dis honour the name of Christ, and will provoke the Spirit of the Lord to depart from you.

Of God's hearing of Prayer.

The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick
in the year 1728.

PSALM lxv. 2.

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

WHAT avails prayer, if it be not heard? But God's people need not lay it aside on that score. Our text bears two things with respect to that matter.

1. A comfortable title ascribed to God, with the unanimous consent of all the sons of Zion, who are all praying persons, *O thou that hearest prayer*. He speaks to God in Zion, or Zion's God, that is, in New-Testament language, to God in Christ. An absolute God thundereth on sinners from Sinai, there can be no comfortable intercourse betwixt God and them, by the law: but in Zion from the mercy-seat in Christ, he is the hearer of prayer; they give in their supplications, and he graciously hears them. Such faith of it they have, that praise waits there for the prayer-hearing God.

2. The effect of the favour of this title of God, spread abroad in the world, *Unto thee shall all flesh come*: not only Jews, but Gentiles. The poor Gentiles, who have long in vain implored the aid of their idols, hearing and believing that God is the hearer of prayer, will flock to him, and present their petitions. They will throng in about his door, where by the gospel they understand beggars are so well served. They will come in even unto thee, Heb. They will come

come in even to thy seat, thy throne of grace, even unto thee thyself, through the Mediator.

The doctrine I chiefly propose speaking to, is,

Doct. God in Christ is the hearer of prayer.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

- I. Wherein God's hearing of prayer lies.
- II. The import of his being the hearer of prayer.
- III. What prayers they are that God hears.
- IV. More particularly consider the hearing and answering of prayer.
- V. Lastly, Apply.

I. I am to shew wherein God's hearing of prayer lies. God being omniscient and every where present, there can nothing be said or done in the world, but he hears or discerns it. But the hearing of prayer in the sense of the scripture is a peculiar privilege of the Lord's people, and lies in the following things.

1. God's accepting of one's prayer, Psal. cxli. 2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening-sacrifice.* Many prayers are said in the world, that are so far from being accepted of God, that they are an abomination to him, Prov. xxviii. 9. God turns them away from him, as one flings a petition over the bar, that he is displeased with, Psal. lxvi. ult. But the prayers that he hears, he is well pleased with them, he approves of them. Hence he is said to attend, hearken to the voice, and consider prayer, as one listens to a sound that pleases him, and dwells on a pleasing thought, Psal. lxvi. 19. *Verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.* He delights in the petition, Prov. xv. 8. *The prayer of the upright is his delight.* He loves to hear the petitioner's voice, Cant. ii. 14. *Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice.* He accepts the petitioner's person, and his petition too, as the angel said unto Lot, Gen.

Gen. xix. 21. See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. For where prayer is heard, the person is accepted too, as Gen. iv. 4. The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering. Job xiii. 9. The Lord also accepted Job.

2. His granting the request, *Psal. xx. 1. 4. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;—grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.* The sinner coming to God with a petition, lays it before him, and his desire is granted. God wills it to be unto him accordingly, *Matth. xv. 28 O woman, said Christ to the woman of Canaan, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* The mercy prayed for is ordered for the sinner, in kind or equivalent. Thus prayer is heard in heaven, heard and granted.

3. His answering of prayer, *Psal. cii. 2. In the day when I call, answer me speedily.* This is more than granting the request, being a giving into the petitioner's hand what is desired. It is an answer not in word to the believer's faith only, but in deed to the believer's sense and feeling. Thus Hannah prayed for a child, and she got one; Paul prayed for the removal of a temptation, and he got grace sufficient to bear him out against it. Thus prayer heard in heaven comes back like the dove with the olive-branch of peace in her mouth.

II. I shall shew the import of God's being the hearer of prayer. These comfortable truths are imported in it.

1. God in Christ is accessible to poor sinners, *2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* Though he sits on the throne of glory, and we are guilty before him; yet he is on a throne of grace, so as we may have access to him with our supplications. The flaming sword of justice guards the tree of

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of life, on the side of the law ; so that on that part our God is a consuming fire, which sinners are not able to dwell with : yet behold him in Christ, and through the veil of his flesh he is accessible to the worst of sinners.

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2. He is a sin-pardoning God, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* Prayer is made particularly for the pardon of sin : the daily cry at the throne is, *Forgive us our debts.* If then he is the hearer of prayer, he is a sin-pardoning God. We cannot pay our debt, but God can forgive it, and will forgive it to all that come to him in Christ for forgiveness. All kinds of sin he forgives freely, Micah vii. 18. If. i. 18. There is no exception, but of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which in its own nature makes the guilty refuse pardon, Matth. xii. 31. The pardon is proclaimed in the gospel, Acts xiii. 38. not to encourage presumption in any, but to prevent despondency in all, Psal. cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveness with thee ; that thou mayst be feared.*

3. He is an all-sufficient God, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am the Almighty God, Heb. all sufficient.* He is self-sufficient for himself, and all-sufficient for his creatures. If he were not so, he could not be the hearer of prayer ; the needs of praying persons would soon exhaust his treasure. But though all flesh come to him for supply of their various wants, he is the hearer of prayer ; he has enough for them all, to answer all their needs, come as oft as they will. He is a fountain of goodness, that never runs dry, but is ever full.

4. He is a bountiful and compassionate God, Psal. lxxxvi. 5. *Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive : and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.* He is willing and ready to communicate of his goodness and mercy to poor sinners for the supply

supply of all their needs. He is more ready to give, than we to ask : we are not straitened in him, for he is the hearer of prayer ; but in our own bowels. He has laid down a method, how we are to ask ; and in that method, it is ask and have, Jam. i. 5. 6. 7. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering : for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. The faith of this is necessary to acceptable prayer, Heb. xi. 6. For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

5. He is an omnipresent and omniscient God, Psal. cxxxix. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? Heb. iv. 13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight : but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. How else could he be the hearer of prayer ? What part of the world soever the petitioner is in, whether he prays with the voice or with the heart only, God is the hearer of prayer. Idolaters might chuse high places to worship their idols in ; but it is all one to the hearer of prayer, whether the petitioner be on the top of the highest mountain, or as low as the centre of the earth. Jonah was heard out of the whale's belly. Though thousands of voices be going in prayer to the throne at the same time, the infinite mind comprehends them all, and every one, as easily as if there were but one at once.

6. Lastly, He is a God of infinite power, Rev. vi. 8. They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty— While there is such a variety of cases, that the creatures have to lay before him in prayer, he could not be the hearer of prayer, if there were any thing too hard for him to do. But nothing

is impossible with him; he calleth things that are not to be as if they were, at the voice of prayer.

III. I proceed to shew what prayers they are that God hears. It is not every prayer, nor every one's prayer that God hears. But it is the prayers of his children, for things agreeable to his will, made by the assistance of his Spirit, and offered through Christ.

1. They are the prayers of his own children, who are justified by faith, and reconciled to him, Jam. v. 6. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Our Lord teaching how to pray, teaches us to call God *our Father*; which can be only through faith. Our persons must be accepted in justification, ere any work of ours can be so. Where there is no peace betwixt God and the sinner, what communion can be there? Amos iii. 3. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* The scripture plain, *God heareth not sinners*, John ix. 31. God's way of giving graciously, is to give other things with Christ, Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* It is in the covenant only that one can have a bottom for acceptance of his prayers.

Object. Then it is in vain for any to pray, but true believers. *Ans.* There is less evil in praying by an unbeliever, than in his omitting it; and consequent less punishment will be. But going to pray, go to Christ by faith, and so your prayer shall be accepted; and no otherwise.

2. They are such prayers of theirs as are for things agreeable to God's will, 1 John v. 14. *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Even in sinners there are remains of a corrupt will, and so it is not left to them to pray for what they please; not that is the choice of their corruption, but what is the choice of their grace. When James and John

would have prayed for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, Christ rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 54. 55. Elias did it, but they might not, not having his spirit.

3. They are prayers made by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, hence called *inwrought*, Gr. Jam. v. 16. No language is acceptable in heaven, but what is learned from thence. It is not the art of prayer, but the Spirit of prayer, that is pleasing in the sight of God. The former may be reached by God's enemies, whose false heart may vent itself by a flattering tongue, as Israel did, Psal. lxxviii. 36. 37. *Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.* The latter is the peculiar privilege of God's children, yet common to them all, Gal. iv. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

4. Lastly, They are prayers offered to God through Christ the Mediator, the soul trusting on his merit and intercession alone for the hearing of them, Dan. ix. 17. *Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.* John xiv. 14. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Christ is the altar on which our spiritual sacrifices can be accepted: and it is not consistent with the honour of God, to hear the prayers of sinners otherwise.

The doctrine being thus explained in the general, I come in the next place more particularly,

1. To confirm it; and shew that there is such a thing as hearing of prayer, the privilege of the Lord's people in this lower world.

2. To shew in what manner the Lord hears prayer.

FIRST,

FIRST, I am to confirm it, and shew that there is such a thing as hearing of prayer, the privilege of the Lord's people in this lower world. God is in heaven, they are on the earth; voices from heaven, or angel-messengers to report the acceptance of prayers there, are not to be expected. Nevertheless we are sure there is such a thing still in being. And it is necessary to prove it,

1. For the sake of a profane generation, who as they are strangers to, so they are despisers of, communion with God.

2. For the sake of formalists, who go about the duty of prayer as a task, but are in no concern for the fruit of it; send away the messenger, but look for no report.

3. For the sake of discouraged Christians, who go bowed down, because they cannot perceive it as they desire.

That God is the hearer of prayer, and will hear the prayers of his people, is evident from these considerations.

First, The supernatural instinct of praying that is found in all that are born of God, Gal. iv. 6: foretold. It is as natural for them to pray, to fall a praying when the grace of God has touched their hearts, as for children when they are born into the world to cry, or to desire the breasts, Zech. xii. 10. *I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications.* Compared with Acts ix. 11. where, in the account that is given of Paul, at his conversion, it is particularly noticed, *Behold, he prayeth.* Hence the whole saving change on a soul comes under the character of this instinct, Jer. iii. 4. 19. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?—I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.* This supernatural instinct, being the work of God in the new nature, cannot be in vain. Accordingly it is determined, If. xlvi. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob,*

Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. But it would be a vain appetite, if it were not to be satisfied by hearing.

Secondly, The intercession of Christ, Rom. viii. 34. *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* It is a great part of the work of Christ's intercession, to present the prayers of his people before his Father, Rev. viii. 4. to take their causes in hand contained in their supplications, 1 John ii. 1. So we find him interceding for his church of old in her low condition, Zech. i. and in the New Testament, John xvii. He is ever at the work, and cannot neglect it, Heb. vii. 25. and it cannot be without effect, John xi. 42. *I knew that thou hearest me always,* said Jesus to his Father.

Thirdly, The promises of the covenant, whereby God's faithfulness is impawned for the hearing of prayer, as Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* If. lxv. 24. *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear.* Psal. cxlv. 19. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.* The promise of hearing of prayer, is one of the great lines of the covenant, Hos. ii. 20. 21. *I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, &c.:* and it is so proposed with his being his people's God, Zech. x. 6: *I am the Lord their God, and will hear them.*

Fourthly, The many encouragements given in the word to the people of God, to come with their cases unto the Lord by prayer. He invites them to his throne of grace with their petitions for supply of their needs, Cant. ii. 14. *O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* He sends afflictions

afflictions for to press them to come, Hos. v. ult. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* He gives them ground of hope of success, Psal. l. 15. whatever extremity their case is brought to, Is. xli. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* He shews them, that however long he may delay for their trial, yet praying and not fainting shall be successful at length, Luke xviii. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

Fifthly, The gracious nature of God, with the endearing relations he stands in to his people, Exod. xxii. 27. *And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear: for I am gracious.* Matth. vii. 9. 10. 11. *What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* He wants not power and ability to fulfil the holy desires of his people; he is gracious, and will withhold no good from them that they really need. He has the bowels of a Father to pity them, the bowels of a mother to her sucking child: He has a most tender sympathy with them in all their afflictions, the touches on them are as on the apple of his eye; and he never refuses them a request, but for their good, Rom. viii. 28.

Sixthly, The experiences which the saints of all ages have had of the answer of prayer. The faith of it brings them to God at first in conversion, as the text intimates: and they that believe cannot be disappointed. Abraham, Moses, David's, and Job's experiences of this kind are in record, with many others, Paul's, &c. The Psalmist sets up his case as a way-mark to all the travellers to Zion, Psal. xxxiv. 6. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him: and*

saved him out of all his troubles. And to this day the saints experience seals the truth thereof.

Lastly, The present ease and relief that prayer sometimes gives to the saints, while yet the full answer of prayer is not come, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* The unbosoming of themselves to the Lord in prayer, comforts and strengthens the heart, 1 Sam. i. 18. This is on the faith of the Lord's hearing of prayer, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.*

SECONDLY, I come to shew in what manner the Lord hears prayer. For clearing of this, I lay down the following observations thereon.

FIRST, A thing desired of God may be obtained, and yet the prayer not heard and accepted, as in Israel's case, Psal. lxxviii. 29. *So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire.* For as it is plain on the one hand, that sinners out of Christ may sometimes obtain a thing they pray for, as in the case of the Ninevites, it is as plain on the other, that no prayer of theirs can be accepted of God, according to John ix. 31. *God beareth not sinners.* It is one thing to get a thing prayed for, another to get it as an answer of accepted prayer, Psal. lxxviii. 34—38. Now this falls out in two cases.

1. When the thing prayed for is given downright in wrath, as it was in the case of the Israelites seeking a king, Hos. xiii. 11. *I gave thee a king in mine anger.* Men often need no more to ruin them, but to get their will; and God may give it them with a vengeance. They get their desire, but it is far from being accepted; for it is in anger it comes to them.

2. When it is given in the way of uncovenanted condescendence. Thus sinners out of Christ may get particular requests of theirs answered, as Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 29. For though God does not accept their persons, nor any performance of theirs; yet he may

may shew regard to his own ordinance of prayer, and therefore make it not fruitless even to them. And thus the Lord does to train on sinners to the yielding themselves to him, and to depending on him by faith and prayer, Hos. xi. 3. *I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms.*

Answers of accepted prayer come in the way of the covenant of grace, but these in the way of common providence. And they may be discerned by these attending signs.

(1.) Wilfulness and unhumbleness of spirit in asking; 1 Sam. viii. 19. *Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us.* When one's will is peremptory, and is not brought to a holy submission to God in the matter, but they will wring the mercy out of God's hand, and have it at any rate, whether with or without his good will; be sure that is what comes in the way of common providence only.

(2.) Strengthening and feeding of lusts by them when received, Psal. lxxviii. 29. 30. Hence on such receipts men commonly grow worse, and their mercies are short lived: being greedily snatched off the tree of providence, ere they are ripe, their teeth are set on edge with them, ver. 30. 31.

(3.) A frame of spirit, in asking and receiving, not of the mould of the gospel, but of the law; whereby more stress is laid upon our own necessity, than on the intercession of Christ; there is much desire of the mercy, but no believing dependence on the Lord for it in the promise as a free promise through Christ; and ordinarily it leaves the heart fixed on the gift, and does not carry it back to the Giver.

SECONDLY, A prayer may be heard and accepted, and yet the desire of it not granted. That is to say, God may be pleased with, and accept of the prayer as service to him; and yet may see meet not to grant the

the thing prayed for. Even as a father going to correct one of his children, may be very well pleased with another child of his interposing for sparing, though he may not see it meet to forbear for all that.

The truth of this is put out of doubt, in the case of Jesus Christ himself, Matth. xxvi. 39. who prayed, saying, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Compare Heb. v. 7. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared.* If it was so done with the Head, no wonder it be so with the members too, as David, 2 Chron. vi. 8. 9. *But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the house, but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.* A thing may be very agreeable to the command of God, to be prayed for, which yet may be otherwise ordered in the holy wise providence of God. It is one thing what he requires of us by his revealed will, another what in his secret will he minds to do, Deut. xxix. ult. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Now of prayers accepted and not granted, it is to be observed,

1. They are not absolute and peremptory, but with holy submission to the divine pleasure, as of our Lord's, Matth. xxvi. 39. If we pray absolutely, for what God has not so promised, and such a prayer is not granted, it is not accepted neither. So all that this amounts to is, that God sees meet to refuse what the petitioner did seek, but with submission to his will either to grant or refuse it.

2. Where

2. Where a prayer is accepted and not granted, there is in the bosom of the denial an unseen greater mercy. Had that cup passed from Christ, where had been the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the salvation of an elect world, that was wrapt up in the denial of that sinless desire of Christ's holy human nature? Had David's child lived for whom he prayed, he had been a lasting stain on his father's reputation: but God refused David's petition in that, where the refusal was a greater mercy, than the granting would have been.

3. Hence that treatment of such prayers is agreeable to the chief scope and aim of the petitioner, which is God's glory and his own good. This is the design of believers in all their accepted prayers, which being agreeable to the promise, there is no jarring there betwixt God and them. Only, they in this case look on such a thing as they pray for to be the most proper mean for that end; God sees it is not, and therefore refuses it. So all that this amounts to is, as if one should desire one to lead him such a way to such a place; he refuses not to lead him to the place, but he will not lead him that way, but a nearer and better way.

Quest. How may I know such prayers of mine to be accepted, when they are not granted?

Ans 1. When the heart is brought to submit to the denial as a holy and righteous dispensation, Psal. xxii. 2. 3. *O my God, I cry in this day-time, but thou bearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* When the sinner from his heart clears the Hearer of prayer, leaving his complaint on his unworthy self, such an effect is an argument of prayer accepted, though not granted.

2. When though the thing be denied, yet divine support under the denial is granted, and made forthcoming: Luke xxii. 42. 43. Christ having prayed, saying, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from*

from me ; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done : there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And he was carried through all his sufferings by his Father, so that he was victorious over death itself. Thus often God, denying the petitions of his children, with respect to temptations, troubles, &c. yet testifies his acceptance of their prayers by the supports given under the same, Psal. cxxxviii.
 3. *In the day when I cried, says David, thou answeredst me ; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

3. *Lastly*, When such a soul is helped to go back to the same God with new petitions in faith and hope of hearing, 2 Sam. xii. 20. *Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped.* This argues a faith of the promise of all's working together for good, Rom. viii. 28. a leaving a latitude of dispensation to sovereignty, well becoming a submissive and resigned petitioner.

THIRDLY, The desire of a prayer may be heard and granted, and yet it may be long ere it be answered. That is to say, all prayers not answered to our sense and feeling, are not lost; they may stand granted in heaven, and yet it may be many a day ere the answer of them come to us. A prayer may be granted, and yet the mercy prayed for be still withheld, so that the petitioner may be obliged to send new petitions day by day for it still.

I shall first confirm this, and then shew why it may be so ordered.

Firſt, To confirm the truth of this, consider,

1. Scripture-instances. Abraham prayed for an heir, it was granted, Gen. xv. 3. 4. yet it was more than thirteen years before that prayer was answered, in the birth of Isaac, Gen. xvii. 25. So the Israelites in Egypt, Exod. ii. 23. 24. and Daniel, chap. ix. 23. Such instances are recorded for our learning.

2. There

2. There is a difference betwixt the granting of a petition, and the intimation of that grant to us; betwixt Heaven's order for our getting of the mercy, and the execution of it. The one is the hearing and grant of prayer, the other is the answer: and though these sometimes may come both in one instant, as Matth. xv. 28. *Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilst: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour;* yet often they are at a great distance of time, as in Abraham's case.

3. The hearing and granting of prayer is an object of faith, the answer of prayer an object of sense and feeling; 1 John v. 14. 15. Matth. xv. 28. A prayer made through the assistance of the Spirit, according to the will of God, and offered to God through Christ, is heard and granted in that instant wherein it is made: and this is what we are to believe, on the ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise, before we get the answer to our sense and feeling; for *faith is the substance of things not seen, and we walk by faith, not by sight;* and therefore this is the ordinary way to put the grant and answer at some distance of time, though not always, If. lxv. 24.

Secondly, I shall shew why the answers of prayers heard and granted, are kept up for a time, and may be for a long time.

1. To keep the petitioners hanging on about the throne of grace, Prov. xv. 8. *The prayer of the upright is his delight.* The Lord by this means gives them many errands to the throne, so that they must always be going back again, and renewing their suits. So fathers make their little children follow them, and hang about them; and speak to them as they can: and no father has such delight in the company and converse of his children, as God has in his, Cant. ii. 14.

2. For the trial of their graces, Jam. i. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is*

is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. This life is the time of trial, and God's with-holding for a time the answers of granted prayers, is a piece of trial that will go in through and out through the child of God. It tries their sincerity and earnestness for an answer, Job xxvii. 10. with Luke xviii. 7; their patience and disposition to wait on God, Hab. ii. 3.; their hope in God, Psal. cxlvii. 11. & xlvi. 5.; especially it tries their faith in the word of promise, and that is a trial of great estimation in the sight of God, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Every new act of faith in the word, is more valuable than all the famed exploits of carnal selfish men; especially when faith keeps hold of the promise like a rope in the water, while providence is bringing one wave after another over the man's head, Psal. lvi. 10. So Matth. xv. 21.—28.

3. Till they be prepared and fitted for receiving the answer, Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* Mercies we need, but we are not at all times meet to receive them. God gives his left-hand gifts to strangers, in the way of common providence, whether they be prepared for them or not: and hence many are ruined getting much laid to their hand, before they have the grace or wisdom to manage it, for God's honour and their own good. But his right-hand gifts to his children, in the way of the covenant, though they be ready for them, yet he will keep them back till they be made ready and prepared for them too. So he is at pains to humble them, and work them for that thing Saul was brought to the kingdom easily, but David not so.

4. *Lazily,*

4. *Lastly*, Till the best time come, for their getting it, when it may come to them with the greatest advantage, Eccl. iii. 14. *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doth it, that men should fear before him.* There is much in the timing of a favour; the same thing may be worth double to a man at one time, beyond what it will be at another. And be sure, if God is keeping back the answer of a granted prayer, he is only reserving till the best time of bestowing it, John xi. 14. 15. & ii. 4.

Ques. How may a Christian know his prayer is heard and granted, while yet it is not answered?

Answ. 1. If ye have prayed in faith, no doubt your petition is heard and granted, though it should not be answered for ever so long after, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* God refuses not, nor rejects any prayer for things agreeable to his will, made in faith of the promise, through the assistance of the Spirit, and offered to him through his Son. And ye ought to believe, that such prayers are granted, but that God for holy wise ends delays the answer.

2. If ye are strengthened to hang on about the Lord's hand, for the answer, hoping and waiting for the Lord, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. It is a certain truth, which ye may build upon, Gal. vi. 9. *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* This is the very character of an elect believer, on his trials for glory, Luke xviii. 7. *Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* Granted prayer brings something in hand, namely, grace to wait on, Psal. xxvii. ult. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.* Compare ver. 13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

3. *Lastly*, It is a good sign when ye are encouraged

ged to wait for the desired answer, by the Lord's answering you in other things that fall out in the mean time of the delay. For the Lord lays these to your hand to support your faith and hope in point of the delayed answer. How was David's faith of the promise of the kingdom kept up, so many years during Saul's reign? Why, David in that time had many experiences of answers of prayer, and fulfilling of promises in other things, as Psal. xxxiv. 6. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles.*

FOURTHLY, Prayers accepted and granted, shall certainly be answered to the believer's sense and feeling at length. The answer may be delayed, but it cannot be forgotten, nor miscarried. Such prayers will surely be turned into praise at long-run; and faith will bring in sense and feeling, when it is tried a while.

I shall first confirm the truth of this, and then shew when they shall be so answered to their sense and feeling.

First, To confirm this, consider,

1. The interest the Mediator has in the matter, which secures and puts it beyond doubt. It is upon his merit that the prayer is accepted, on his intercession that it is granted: so that he is nearly concerned in the obtaining of the answer: and then he is the great Steward in heaven, into whose hands the whole fulness of covenant-benefits for sinners supply is put. How then can it fail, when the mercy petitioned for, is lodged in the hand of our Intercessor for it?

2. The faithfulness of God in his word, Psal. lxxxix. 8. *O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?* This stands as a rock immovable in all the changes that befall his people. His word must be accomplished, and his promise fulfilled, whatever stand in the way of it. Heaven and earth shall rather be removed than it fail, or fall a minute behind the set time of its bringing

bringing forth, Hab. ii. 3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

3. The love and pity God has to his children that cry to him. *His ears are open to their cry,* Psal. xxxiv. 15. He forgets it not, Psal. ix. 12. As he is their God, so he will be *a God to them*, as the expression is, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. namely, to do the part of a God to them; that is, to hear and answer their prayers.

4. *Lafly,* Such prayers are the product of his own Spirit in them, Rom. viii. 26. And be sure, the mouths that he opens, he will fill; the holy appetite and desires that he creates in them, he will satisfy.

Secondly, I shall shew when they shall be answered to their sense and feeling. There are two periods in general, wherein God gives answers of prayers accepted and granted. Answers of prayer are given,

1. In time, during the petitioner's life in this world, Psal. lviii. ult. *Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* Believers in this life have communion with God, and do get answers of prayer, as provision allowed them of their Father, for their journey through the wilderness. But one may wait a long time of his life, for an answer of some prayers, and ere he go off be made to say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,* Luke ii. 29. 30.

Of the seasons of life for answers of prayer, we may say in the general, there are four seasons thereof.

(1.) A time of the Lord's return to a church and people from whom he had hid his face, Psal. cii. 16. 17. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* The children may cry long to their Father, ere he let on he notices

them, when he is angry with their mother: but when he is pleased with her, they get speedy answers from him, Dan. ix. 1. 2. 23. Times of reformation, and outpouring of the Spirit on a land, are times of answers of prayer to particular persons: which should move us to carry along the public case, with our private cases, as David did, Psal. li. 18. 19. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem, &c.*

(2.) A time of greatest extremity, when matters are carried to the utmost point of hopelessness, Deut. xxxii. 36. *For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.* When God's people are brought to that, they can do no more, then is the special season of God's doing for them, Is. xli. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* When the child was laid by for dead, the well was discovered. When the knife was at Isaac's throat, the answer comes from heaven, *Stay thine hand.* A sentence of death is often passed on all probable means, the thing is put as it were in the grave, and the stone sealed: and then comes the resurrection of it, 2 Cor. i. 8. 9. 10. Psal. cxxvi. 1. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*

(3.) A time of the petitioner's deepest humiliation, when he is beat down from all his heights, and brought as low as the dust of the Lord's feet, as in Job's case, chap. xlvi. 6. 7. &c. and the woman of Canaan's, Matth. xv. 27. 28. It is the Lord's way with his children to lay them very low, before he raise them up; to empty them soundly of themselves, before he fill them. They must be made to see their own utter unworthiness, that God is no debtor to them, be wholly resigned to the divine pleasure, and become as a weaned child. And that may cost much hewing:

hewing; but it is the way they are prepared for mercy, Psal. x. 17.

(4.) *Lastly*, A time wherein the mercy may come most seasonably for God's honour and their comfort, Gal. vi. 9. *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* The husbandman expects to reap his crop in the harvest, for that is the most proper season. Our God is the best judge of time for this or that purpose, and he does all in judgement, Deut. xxxii. 4. So that the petitioner shall be fully satisfied as to the delay of the answer, and the whole steps of providence in the matter, and be made to sing as Rev. xv. 3. saying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

2. In eternity, when the believing petitioner is got into another world, then will be a season of answers of prayer, Mal. iii. 17. 18. *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.* I do not say, they will pray in another world, but prayers poured out in this world will be answered in another world, partly after death, and fully and completely at the resurrection. For consider,

(1.) There are accepted and granted prayers that are never answered on this side of time; yet they cannot miss to be answered, Psal. ix. 18. *For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.* Therefore they are answered in eternity. Such is that prayer of all the children of God, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* the complete victory over all their enemies, and being set beyond their reach, which is delayed till the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 26. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death.*

(2.) There are prayers that are answered here in part, but are not fully answered till the petitioner comes into another world. The prayers for the coming of Christ's kingdom are begun to be answered now, but they will not be fully answered till the last day. Petitions for deliverance from temptation, the power of lusts and corruptions, are answered so as an earnest is given, but the full answer is till then in reserve, Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

(3.) Lastly, All the accepted prayers of those that wait for the Lord, whether for their souls or their bodies, will be at once answered in heaven fully: there the promises will be told out to them for ever in full tale. There are many prayers for deliverance from temptations, trials, and troubles, which God sees not meet to answer now; but they will be all answered at once then, Rev. xxi. 4. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

Therefore, let none think that all the prayers are lost, that are not answered during this life: for prayers here made in faith, may be delayed as to their answer, till the petitioner come home to his Father's house: and there will be a second crop there of prayers answered here.

Ques. When an answer of prayer comes, how shall it be known to be an answer of accepted and granted prayer, and not come in the way of common providence?

Answ. 1. Mercies that come so make the soul more holy, tender, and watchful, whereas others prove snares and fewel to mens lusts, Psal. vi. 8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.* Common providence filled the rich man's barns, then said he, *Soul, take thine ease.*

2. They

2. They enlarge the soul in thankfulness to God, Psal. cxvi. 1. 12. *I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications. What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?* And they make it to rejoice more in the Giver, than in the gift, 1 Sam. ii. 1. *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.* The signature of God's good-will that is upon the mercy, makes it of a great bulk, though it may be a small thing in itself, Gen. xxxiii. 10. *I have seen thy face, said Jacob to Esau, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.* Thus coming from God in the way of the covenant, it leads back to God: but others not so.

3. Lastly, They come seasonably, the heart being in some measure prepared for the receipt, Psal. x. 17. when the soul is moulded in a submissive disposition. Exercised souls will be afraid of a mercy's coming too soon.

FIFTHLY, God answers prayer, either by giving the very thing itself asked, or the equivalent of it. As a man may pay his bond, either in money, or money-worth. So there are two ways of God's fulfilling his promises, and answering his people's prayers.

1. Sometimes God answers prayer by giving the very thing desired. So he answered Hannah's prayer for a child, and Solomon's prayer for wisdom. And what comes that way will bear much bulk in the eyes of a gracious soul, because of the good-will of God that is stamped on it, whereby it is distinguished from what comes in the common road.

And what comes that way, readily comes with a good incast to it, especially if the petitioner has been kept long hanging on for it. Such an incast got Solomon, 2 Chron. i. 12. *Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had, that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.* They that wait long for their answer, ordinarily get as it were both the stock and interest

terest together. So Abraham and Sarah waited long for the promised seed, even till they were come to extreme old age: and then they got it with a renewing of their age.

2. Sometimes by giving, though not the thing itself, yet the equivalent of it, that which is as good; as one may pay his bond, by giving, though not money, yet what is as good as money. Thus though God did not give David the child's life, yet he gave him a Solomon, a mercy as good and better. Paul, though he got not free of the temptation at his asking, yet he got grace sufficient to bear him up under it, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

And God's as-good that he gives his people, will readily be found better, all things considered. That is best which is best for God's honour and our good, and God knows better than we what is most suitable to these purposes. It would have been more easy for Paul, to have been freed from the messenger of Satan; but it was more for God's honour and his spiritual good, to be helped to fight that messenger and overcome.

Learn then, that your prayers may be answered, though ye get not the very thing ye ask. Though God answer you not in kind, if he answer you in kindness, ye have no reason to say your prayer is not heard. If he take not off your burden, yet if he gives you support, he hears you, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. There are two ways how God gives his people as good.

(1.) Sometimes he gives them as good in the same kind; though he gives them not the same temporal mercy they would have had, he gives them another of the same kind as good as it. Though he gave not David the life of the child he asked, he gave him a Solomon. So God reserves to himself the chusing.

(2.) Sometimes he gives them as good in another kind; as not giving them such a temporal mercy, he gives them a spiritual mercy and enjoyment in the room of it; and surely there is no loss there.

Ques.

Ques. How may one know that God answers his prayer, by giving him the as-good?

Answ. 1. When that which is given answers or serves the purpose as well as the thing desired would have done. David desired the child's life as a token of God's reconciliation with him; but Solomon's birth answered the same purpose, 2 Sam. xii. 24. 25. So there was no loss as to the main thing in view.

2. When the heart is brought to rest contented with what is given, in the room of what was desired. So Moses was sufficed with a sight of the land from Pisgah, instead of entering into it. When the thing given takes the heart off what is withheld, it is a sign it comes as an answer of prayer by the way of an as-good.

3. When a person is to his own conviction a gainer by the choice God makes for him. Thus the Lord sometimes answers his people's prayers in trouble for deliverance, by giving them manifestations of his love and mercy, which they would not have gotten if the trouble had been removed, Lam. iii. 57. *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.*

SIXTHLY, God's answer of prayer sometimes agrees with the expression used in prayer, though not with the preconceived design and desire of the petitioner. There is a special help of the Spirit allowed God's people in prayer, beyond what they have otherwise, Rom. viii. 26. Hence going to God on such a particular errand, they are sometimes carried so to express their desire, that the answer agrees exactly to the expression used in the petition, though the petition as expressed doth swerve somewhat from what they intended.

It will therefore be profitable on the receiving an answer of prayer, to compare it with the expression in which the petition was made: and the harmony betwixt them being observed, will set the matter of the answer in a clear light.

LASTLY,

LASTLY, One mercy may be the answer of the prayers of many. Whether it be a public mercy to a society, or a private mercy to a particular person, it may be given in answer to the prayers of many, and many may take the comfort of that answer. As when the prayers of a congregation are heard, or a mercy is given which many have privately prayed for, though the answer is one, it may belong to many.

Quest. How may one know that in such a case there has been any regard had to his prayer for the mercy?

Answ. 1. If thy heart did join in prayer for the mercy, with others, thy affections being touched with earnest desire of the mercy, thy soul lifted up to depend on the merit and intercession of Christ for the granting it, thou needest not doubt but it is an answer to thy prayer as well as to others, Matth. xviii. 19. *I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

2. If thou findest thy heart enlarged in thankfulness to God for the mercy when it is obtained, that is another evidence that it is an answer to thy prayer as well as others, 2 Cor. iv. 15. *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.* Many a prayer had been put up for the coming of the Messiah; Simeon when he saw him is transported with thankfulness of heart, as having obtained his desire, Luke ii. 29.

I shall now shut up this subject with some practical improvement.

USE I. of information. Hence see,

1. How much we poor sinners stand indebted to free grace providing a Saviour for us. We could have had no access with our prayers to an absolute God; justice would have barred our acceptance. So fallen angels have no access to God allowed them; for

for Christ took not on their nature. But great is our privilege in this point, 1 John ii. 1. For if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

2. The hainousnes of the sin of neglecting prayer. A price is put in mens hands to get wisdom, but they have no heart to it. The door of mercy and grace stands open, but they will not come to it: God sits on a throne of grace, ready to answer petitions; but they have none to put in his hand.

3. The impiety and profaneness that is in abusing of prayer, making a scorn of it in ordinary conversation, as *God pity you, help you, bless us, save us, &c.* How lamentable is it, that the name of God, and the ordinance of prayer, should be thus prostituted to the lusts of men at every trifle! The day will come, when God's pity, help, &c. which ye make so light of now, will appear more valuable than ten thousand worlds, and ye shall not have them, if ye repent not of that contempt which ye now treat them with.

4. The folly of those who are in no concern for the hearing of their prayers. Surely, they forsake their own mercy. Ye would have little satisfaction in your meat, if it did not feed you; in your cloaths, if they did not keep you warm. What satisfaction then can ye have in your praying, if ye cannot find it is heard?

5. Lastly, This shews why serious souls do so much value prayer, and betake themselves thereto in all their straits. Slight it who will, it will not be slighted by those who have experience of the Lord's hearing their prayers, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* Daniel was such a man; and he would rather venture on the den of lions, than forego his praying to God. The neglect of it, is a sign of unacquaintednes with that.

USE II. Of direction and comfort to the people of God,

God, in all the trials and troubles they meet with in the world. Here is your course ye should take, Go to God with your case, whatever it be, and make your prayer to him about it, Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing : but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Here is your comfort, God is the hearer of prayer, If. xlv. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* There are four things I would suggest to you here for your direction and comfort.

1. God has made the way to heaven lie through many tribulations, that his children might have the more errands to his throne of grace. That this is the path-road to the kingdom of God, is clear from scripture-testimony, Acts xiv. 22.—*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God ; John xvi. ult. In the world ye shall have tribulation ;* and the experience of Christ the head, and the saints in all ages. That this is the design of it, appears also from the word, Hos. v. ult. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face : in their affliction they will seek me early.* Prosperity seldom fails to issue in forgetting of God, Deut. xxxii. 15. Adversity causes to feel a need of his help, Zeph. iii. 12. So God keeps the thorn of affliction at the breast of his people, to keep them waking, and sends the cross to invite them to the throne of grace.

2. The way to heaven in that respect never alters, though the external circumstances of the church in the world do alter. Sometimes there is persecution in the church, sometimes peace ; but in the most peaceable time of the church, God's people shall go through the world to the kingdom through much tribulation. The seed of the serpent will vent their enmity one way or other against the people of God, though they have not law on their side to bear them out in persecuting them. God will have his people tried,

tried, and caused to suffer in their bodies, goods, liberty, and life, if not by the hands of persecutors, yet by his own hand one way or other. For that is a perpetual rule, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* So there is no change, but only as to the means and instruments of trial.

3. Whatever be your trial, whether it be in temporal or spiritual things, ye are welcome to the throne of grace with it, Phil. iv. 6. forecited. Whether it come on you immediately from the hand of God, or men, ye may carry it to God by prayer, and pour out your heart before him as a prayer-hearing God, in confidence that he can help you, and will do it in due time.

4. The more trials and afflictions God's people meet with, the more experience readily they will be found to have of God's hearing of prayer, Rom. v. 3. 4. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.* Of all the patriarchs Jacob had the maniest trials, and accordingly was richest in experiences. The more battles the Christian soldier is engaged in, the more is he enriched with spoil. The Israelites had not sung that triumphant song recorded Exod. xv. had they not been in that great strait at the Red sea.

USE last, of exhortation. Then,

1. Improve your privilege of access to God through Christ in prayer. Since God has cast open the gates of mercy, come enter in by them: since he is saying to you, *What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?* slight not the golden season of petitioning. Consider,

(1.) Your need is great. Whatever ye have or
H h war t

want in temporals, surely ye need a resting place for your conscience and for your heart : you need something to make you happy in time and eternity.

(2.) The whole creation cannot answer your needs. There is an emptiness in every creature, that it cannot be a resting-place to you, *If. iv. 2.* The soul is of such a make, that no less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Only God in Christ can make you happy.

(3.) He offers to supply all your needs, *Psal. lxxxi. 10. I am the Lord thy God ;—open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Ask in faith, and ye shall receive.

(4.) Lastly, This door of access will not always stand open, *Matth. xxv. 10 11. 12. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Now is the accepted time.*

2. Be concerned for God's hearing of your prayers : look after them, and see what speed they come. There are two things wherein this concern should appear.

(1.) In making your addresses to the throne of grace, being careful so to manage that as ye may be accepted. They who are rash in their approaches to God, and careless how their petitions are formed and presented, cannot be duly concerned for a hearing of them. Labour therefore so to pray, as your prayers may be heard and accepted.

(2.) In depending and waiting on after prayer for an answer, *Psal. v. 3. My voice I will thou hear in the morning, O Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* Do not drop your suits, but insist for an answer, depending for it on the promise of God in his word.

Thus far of God's hearing of prayer. I shall shut up this with a word to another doctrine for the use of the whole.

DOCT.

DOCTR. Such is the glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that it will make all flesh that discerns it come unto him.

Here I shall shew,

I. What is that glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that is so attractive.

II. How this glory of God in Christ is discerned by a sinner.

III. What that coming unto God is, that is the effect of discerning that glory.

IV. Lastly, Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew what is that glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that is so attractive. It is twofold.

i. The glory of his all-sufficiency, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am God all-sufficient.* He is not only all-sufficient for himself, but for his creatures: if he were not so, he could not be the hearer of prayer. But sinners in the darkness of their natural state discern it not: they cannot comprehend what way he can be so, and therefore they traverse the round of the creation, seeking in the creature that sufficiency; till the light of the glory of God's all sufficiency shine into their hearts in Christ. Then it shines unto them with a threefold ray of glory.

(1.) An absolute suitableness to their case, which must needs be very glorious in their eyes, since that is what they were always seeking, but could never find before, according to that, Is. iv. 2. *Wherfore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Therefore with the wise merchant they sell all to buy the one pearl, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. The heart of man is an empty, hungry thing, going among the creatures seeking a match for itself, in which it may rest: but there they can-

not find it ; but discovering it in a God in Christ, they are attracted with the glory of that sight.

(2.) A complete fulness for them, Col. i. 19. *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* In his all-sufficiency the soul sees the fulness of a Godhead, an infinite boundless fulness, to answer and satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. That is a fountain for the thirsty soul to drink at to the full ; a treasure to enrich the soul oppressed with poverty ; a salve for all its sores, and a remedy for all its wounds. So it cannot miss to attract.

(3.) An ability to help in all possible incidents, Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* The arm of the creature is weak in all cases, and quite too short in many cases ; but so is not the arm of an all-sufficient God, Is. lxi. 1. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save : neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.* There is nothing too hard for him, there is nothing that Omnipotency can stick at. Who can but draw towards such a one for a Friend ?

2. The glory of his free grace and good-will to poor sinners ; hence the heavenly host sang, Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.* When the Lord would shew Moses his glory, he proclaimed the name of the Lord before him, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* The glory of all-sufficiency may attract the desire of sinners ; but the sinner cannot come to him, while that treasure appears to be locked up from him, a gulf fixed betwixt him and it. But when once an all-sufficient God appears in the glory of his free grace in Christ, the treasure appears open to the sinner, there is a bridge for him laid over the gulf : and

so he comes freely away to God in Christ. This shines to the coming sinner with a threefold ray of glory.

(1.) Readiness to forgive sin, Psal. cxxx. 4. 7. 8. *But there is forgiveness with thee; that thou mayst be feared. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* He is gracious to pardon the sins for which he might justly condemn the sinner: he is willing to be reconciled to offenders, and receive them into peace, 2 Cor. v. 19. This is an attractive glory where the conscience is awakened.

(2.) Willingness to give and communicate all that is needful to make the sinner happy, Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* He is gracious to give, as well as to forgive, Hos. xiv. 2.; not only to lay by his wrath against the sinner, but to load him with benefits.

(3.) And all this freely, without any view to any worth in the creature, as If. lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* No condition, no qualification is required: only the sinner is welcome to take and have, whatever he has been.

II. The next thing is to shew, how this glory of God in Christ is discerned by a sinner.

1. The mean of discerning it is the gospel, 2 Cor. iii. ult. *Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.* As by means of light in the air we discern bodily objects, so by the means of the gospel we discern this glory of God, 2 Cor. iv. 4. By the law we discern the glory of an absolute God terrifying and confounding to a sinner, but by the gospel the glory of God as in Christ, attracting and refreshing to a sinner.

It is as a looking-glass wherein we see the image of things, 2 Cor. iii. ult. It brings before us the lovely image of a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

2. The organ or instrument of discerning it is faith, Hab. iv. 2. Though there be full light in the air, and the looking-glass presenting the beautiful image of a person, be set before one's face, if the man's eyes be out, he cannot discern it. So the glory of God in Christ is held forth unto men in the gospel; but they are spiritually blind who are unbelievers, they perceive it not, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* But faith sees the glory, John i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

3. The author of sinners discerning it is the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. ult. It is he that illuminates the dark mind, that cures sinners of their natural blindness. He works faith in the soul, brings home the gospel-report to the sinner in particular, demonstrating it to be the word of God, and God's word to him in particular, and so makes the soul embrace it by believing it, If. liii. 1.

III. The third head is to shew what that coming unto God is, that is the effect of discerning that glory. The sinner discerning the glory of God in Christ as the Hearer of prayer,

1. He comes away from all other doors, which before he used to hang about for supply. He despairs at length of coming speed there, Jer. iii. 22. 23. *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:*

tains : truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. The light of the glory of God shining into his heart, discovers the emptiness of all the poor shifts the sinner makes to get supply in his natural state of blindness.

(1.) He comes away from the door of the empty creation, where he had long laboured to find a rest; and despairs of finding it there any more. The profits, pleasures, comforts, and conveniences of this world, appear lying vanities that can never give rest to the heart ; and they must have another portion, Jer. xvi. 19. *O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.*

(2.) From the door of sin, where he expected a satisfaction in the fulfilling of his lusts ; and he despairs of ever finding it there, Job xxxiii. 27. He finds that puddle-water will not quench his thirst, that the pleasure of it is but short, but the pain and sting of it lasting.

(3.) From out of the world lying in wickedness, 2 Cor. vi. 17. as he would escape away from lions dens and mountains of leopards, Cant. iv. 8. He despairs of ever finding his account in the way of the world.

2. He comes away unto God in Christ, for all, and instead of all, Jer. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* And he comes unto him,

(1.) As a Saviour, that will save his submissive supplicants, Jer. iii. 22. 23. Faith apprehends him as God our Saviour, and so comes to him and trusts on him for salvation, from sin and from wrath, Matth. i. 21. *Thou shalt call his name Jesus : for he shall save his people from their sins.*

(2.) As a portion, that will eternally make up impoverished and ruined creatures, Psal. cxlii. 5. and in

in which the poor petitioner may find what he has so long sought for in vain, in the world and the way of sin.

(3.) As his resort for ever in all his needs, whatever they shall be, Psal lxxi. 3. The soul coming unto God, comes to him as one that will never go back to another, but will hang on about his door, though he should die at it.

I conclude with an inference or two.

1. Whoso come not unto God in Christ, as a Saviour, &c. are certainly ignorant of him, and see him not in his glory : *For they that know thy name, says the psalmist, will put their trust in thee,* Psal. ix. 10.

2. Great and powerful must that glory be, which draws sinners from all other doors unto God. By nature we are backward to come unto God ; it must be a very ravishing glory that has such an effect on perverse sinners.

3. Lastly, Be concerned to discern that glory; to discern it by faith, and by experience, in order to your coming to him as your Saviour, portion, and continual resort.

ON ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

The Doctrine of the Acceptance of Mens Works explained, and a practical Regard thereto in all the Duties of Life inculcated.

The substance of several Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1726.

2 COR. viii. 12.

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

THE Christians in Judea being in much distress and poverty, there was a contribution through the churches of the Gentiles for them. The communion of saints extends not only to spiritual, but temporal things too; that they be ready to help one another out of their substance. And this communication of worldly things to the supply of the saints, is not confined to those of our own church; but is to be extended to strangers on occasion, at the greatest distance. The gospel came from Judea to the Gentiles; and now money must go from the Gentiles for the relief of those of Judea. Hereby God took a trial of the Gentile churches their love to and esteem of the gospel. Many will pretend to great esteem of the gospel, but they must have it for nothing. Any of their money that is desired for any public use, for the furtherance of the gospel, it is all accounted lost.

This

This contribution is here recommended to the Corinthians. They readily fell in with the proposal, ver. 11. Now they are desired to perform, each according to his ability.

In the text, an objection of the poorer sort is answered, who might fear that any thing they had to give was so little, that it would not be accepted. In answer thereto, they are told that God regards mens works rather by the quality, than the quantity ; by the mind it is given with, rather than by the thing given.

1. The case of acceptance is put, *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted.* The acceptance here is of a man's work, not of his person ; though the former always presupposeth the latter, in the gospel-way. And it refers to God, for he only can judge with what mind a thing is done. Now God accepts a man's service, *if there be first a willing mind*; that is, a readiness and good will to the work of his service. If the heart go before, and lead the hand, it is accepted : otherwise it is not.

2. What regard is had in this acceptance of one's work, to the quantity of it. (1.) That it be according to one's ability, that it be done to his power. Some are able to do more, and be more useful than others : but if men have a willingness to the work, and do what they are able accordingly, it is accepted through Christ ; his that can do but little, as well as his that can do much. But this cuts off the pretences of those, who content themselves with lazy wishes, and lay not out themselves to do what they may do. (2.) That want of power to do more, shall not mar the acceptance of what is done according to power with a willing mind, Mark xii. 43. The Lord will take the little piece of service off his people's hand, when the heart is right ; as well as the great service of those of his that have great abilities. Not but that where the inability is brought on by people's own fault, it is their sin that they do not do more ; but that sin shall be forgiven them, and

and what they do be accepted, if there be first a willing mind.

The scope and substance of the text may be taken up in the following doctrines.

DOCT. I. *Works may be done in service to God, that are not accepted of him.*

DOCT. II. *It should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God.*

DOCT. III. *Where there is a willing mind carrying out a man to do and serve the Lord, to his ability, what is so done is accepted of God.*

DOCT. IV. *Want of power to do more, shall not mar the acceptance of what is done from a willing mind according to one's power. In that case, God will accept of his people's will for the deed.*

I shall speak to each of these doctrines in order.

DOCT. I. *Works may be done in service to God, that are not accepted of him.*

In treating this point, I shall,

- I. Confirm the doctrine.
- II. Assign the reasons thereof.
- III. Make some improvement.

I. In order to confirm the doctrine, consider,

1. Oft-times God hides his face from the man and his work too, and people have no communion with God in their services to him, Hos. v. 6. *They shall go with their flocks, and with their herds to seek the Lord: but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them.* When a master will not look on his servant's work, it is an evidence he is not pleased with him, nor it, Is. i. 15. This may be the case of the godly sometimes, and it is the case of the wicked always. O how many lost services are there this way!

2. Such services may be so far from being accepted,

ed, that they are really loathsome to a holy God, Prov. xv. 8. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* He reckons them to be to no purpose, he is full of them, they are vain in his esteem, he cannot endure them, they are a trouble, a burden, and a weariness to him, If. i. 11.—14. So it is often fulfilled in this case, *That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God;* Luke xvi. 15. The man thinks highly of his own work, and others do so too: but in the mean time God abhors it.

3. God may put such services out of the roll of services to him, and set them down in the roll of sins against him. That is a terrible word, Jer. vii. 21. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh:* i. e. Put your sacrifices that should be all burnt on the altar, to your other sacrifices, and eat all together as common flesh to fill your bellies: q. d. Let your prayers, and your common discourse; your hearing of sermons, and your idle tales, go together; I esteem the one no more than the other. And that is another dreadful word, Amos iv. 4. *Come to Beth-el and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:* q. d. Go to your knees now, and take the name of God in vain; go to the church, and put off a little time of a Sabbath-day.

4. They may bring a curse and a stroke on men, instead of a blessing and token of God's favour, Hos. viii. 13. *They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.* Nadab and Abihu were consumed by a fire that came out from the altar they were serving at; Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, on occasion of selling their land, for the service of the church; and men may be smothered with the dung of their sacrifices spread on their faces, Mal. ii. 3.

5. Lastly,

5. *Lastly*, This may take place while the service stands the man both cost and pains. The Israelites were at cost for spices for the altar, but all was rejected, *Jer. vi. 20.*; they were at pains in attending ordinances, and endured a stress in fasting, but all to no purpose, *If. lviii. 2. 3.* Bodily exercise profiteth little before God, who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

II. I am next to render the reasons of the point, That works may be done in service to God, that are not accepted of him. God is no austere master, but very indulgent to his servants, and will take a very small service kindly off their hands: but men often serve him in a way that is provoking to him, and to his dishonour; and thence are the reasons why their services are not accepted.

1. Sometimes that is offered for service to God, that is forbidden by him, *John xvi. 2.* *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.* A blinded conscience gets the leading of a man, and leads him out of the way of God: it dictates what is sin to be duty, and what is duty to be sin; so that the man thinks he is serving God, while he is really serving his own corruptions; and so instead of a *Well done, good and faithful servant*, he meets with a *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness*, *If. v. 20.*; and *lies down at length in sorrow*, *If. l. ult.*

2. Sometimes that is offered that is not commanded or required, *Matth. xv. 9.* *In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Nothing can be acceptable to God, but what is required by some one or other command of his; *for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*, *Rom. xiv. ult.* See *If. i. 12.* Horrid idolatry is condemned on that very ground, that it was uncommanded service, *Jer.*

vii. 31. It is an affront to the sovereignty of God, and his mastership, for men to order his service according to the devices of their own hearts, and not to keep precisely to his orders. Hence are the superstitions of Popery, and the uninstituted ceremonies of the church of England, which are the product of human device, without any countenance from the word of God.

3. Oft-times, though the work be commanded of God, yet it is marred in the making. There is something about the person, or the work, that ruins all.

1/3, About the person, that mars the acceptance. As,

(1.) He may be in a state of separation from Christ, not united to him by faith, and so not accepted of God, John xv. 5. No acceptable work can be done by any man while he is out of Christ, Eph. ii. 10. For a man's person must be accepted, before his work can be accepted, since his work being imperfect, cannot procure the acceptance of his person. Now no sinner's person is accepted but in Christ, Eph. i. 6. and we come to be in Christ by faith; therefore faith in Christ must go before acceptable obedience, Heb. xi. 6. Faith makes the tree good, ere it can bring forth good fruit, Matth. vii. 17. And no fruit of obedience is accepted of God, but what grows on a branch of Christ the true vine: The blasting curse lies on all other. See Gen. vi. 9.

(2.) He may be in a state of enmity with God: and as no man will like the services of his enemies, so God will not accept the services of one not reconciled to him, Amos iii. 3. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* Every unbeliever is an enemy to God, Rom. viii. 7. for his sin remains unpardoned, and his nature unchanged: and therefore his best works are but splendid sins, himself but a whitened sepulchre; and when he speaks and acts fairest, there are seven abominations in his heart. How then can an all-seeing God accept such services?

(3.) He

(3.) He may be an unregenerate man, and so like Simon *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, Acts viii. 23. Whoever are out of Christ, are unregenerate; for it is by being in him, and so partaking of his Spirit and fulness, that we become new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. i. 13. Now how can the corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? or the old nature acceptable obedience? If the fountain be poisoned, can the streams be wholesome? Could one like the best liquor in a vessel wherein there is no pleasure?

(4.) He may be habitually unholy or profane in his life, or as to the body of his conversation, Prov. xxviii. 9. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.* So the Lord rejects the sacrifices of the Israelites, Is. i. 15. 16. The Psalmist tells us, that *the man who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place, must have clean hands, and a pure heart*, Psal. xxiv. 3. 4. The apostle wills to *lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. if we would be accepted. Their conversation must be of a piece, whose works will be accepted: for God will never accept the services of men, that for the most part serve the devil, the world, and their lusts. Many are like the harlot, Prov. vii. 13. 14. as if they thought their duties would purge away their sins. Nay but their sinful courses otherwise will pollute and render abominable their duties, Hag. ii. 11.—14.

2dly, About the work, that may mar its acceptance.

(1.) It may be none of the work of the Spirit of Christ in the man, but proceeding from a man's self allenarly. All good works accepted of God are the product of the Holy Spirit in believers, as the sap which the vine-stock communicates to the branches. Therefore to *the works of the flesh*, Gal. v. 19. are opposed *the fruits of the Spirit*, ver. 22. And all goodness is the fruit of the Spirit, Eph. v. 9. and a

Christian's life is a *walking after the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 1. as a borrowed life. And as no common hearth-fire could be accepted at the altar, but only the holy fire that came from heaven; so no work will be offered to the Father for acceptance by the Son, but what is the work of his own Spirit; and no work will be accepted by the Father, but what is offered by the Son as intercessor. See Eph. ii. 18. See what prayer is accepted, Jam. v. 16. Not the prayer of every one, but of a *righteous man*: not every prayer of a righteous man neither, but *the inwrought* (Gr.) *prayer of his*, viz. that which is inwrought by the Spirit.

(2.) It may be no work of love to God, or of a willing mind; but done awkwardly and against the grain, 1 Tim. i. 5.; some by considerations moving the man to serve the Lord; and no liking of him or his service. Forced service can never be accepted, that which people are constrained to. It is the obedience of slaves, not of sons, that natural men do perform; and flows from a spirit of fear, more than a spirit of love, 2 Tim i. 7. See Is. Ixiv. 5.

(3.) It may be not done in faith, and so cannot be accepted, Heb. xi. 6. Acceptable service is done in the faith of the command, having authority on the man's conscience; and in the faith of the promise, the promise of strength to perform, and the faith of the reward of grace, believing the labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. ult. But instead of that, most of our good works are done without any regard to God's authority, without any dependence on him for strength, and without the true hope of the gratuitous reward of grace won by Christ to be communicated to us.

(4.) It may be done selfishly; men seeking their own profit in them, more than God's honour; seeking to please their own conscience, that otherwise will not let them rest, rather than to please God; seeking a name to themselves, rather than to glorify his

his name; and to save their own souls from hell by them, rather than to testify their thankfulness to the Saviour, who has purchased salvation by his blood. This is to pervert the end of duties, to use them for unhallowed ends; in a word, to serve ourselves, and not God: and therefore no more to be accepted than a servant's working his own instead of his master's work, Hos. ix. 4. Zech. vii. 6. Yea good things may be done downright to serve a lust, or to satisfy a passion, Matth. xxiii. 14. 2 Sam. iii. 9

(5.) It may be done by chance rather than of design, Lev. xxvi. 21. *Heb.* There are who are chance-customers to religion, who fall in with a good work, rather because it falls in their way, than because God lays it in their way: as the Danites, Judg. xviii. 5. God looks to the heart, and undesigned service to him will be reckoned no serving of him, but serving one's own fancy. This is another thing than one's embracing an opportunity which the Lord puts in his hand, Gal. vi. 10. wherein one is glad of an occasion of serving God.

(6.) It may be done by the power of a custom, rather than of conscience. Custom, fallen into by education, or otherwise, is the spring of many duties done by men: wherein men move, by that, as a clock by the weights; rather than from an inward principle: which can never be acceptable to the heart-searching God, who requires reasonable service.

(7.) It may be done in a flighting manner, dealing scripply and grudgingly with God. As when there is no proportion between the work and one's ability, as in the rich men casting in their little piece of brass-money, Mark xii. 41.; when men offer to God, not the best, but the most worthless they have: so did Cain, Gen. iv. 3. 4. Thus men by thinking any thing may serve in the service of God, pour contempt on the holy One, and bring on themselves a curse instead of a blessing, Mal. i. 14.

(8.) *Lastly,* When it is not offered to God for acceptance

ception through Christ. It is God's appointment, Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* A young pigeon would have been accepted on the altar of Jerusalem, when a bullock would not have been accepted on the altar of Bethel. If the service of men be never so great and costly, if it is offered to God otherwise, and the acceptance of it looked for because of its own worth, it will be rejected, Rev. vii. 14. No works favour with God, but as they favour of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15.

I now proceed to make some short improvement of what has been said.

1. People may do much in the service of God, and yet do nothing to purpose, Eccl. x. 15. A man may go many a weary foot, and yet never come to the place he designed, while he wanders from the right way, 2 John 8. Such wanderers in religion are all unregenerate men, who set about duties : they are busy, doing nothing. They do many good things like Herod, and yet they never do one thing acceptably. For their persons are not accepted ; and so their works cannot be so.

2. Even among the duties of a godly man, there may be much refuse ; many unaccepted duties. A believer's person is always accepted of God, Eph. i. 6. for the state of justification is perpetual. But such may be the prevalence of faithlessness, selfishness, &c. in some particular works of his, that they may never come to be accepted of God ; for sanctification has its ups and downs, being liable to many changes.

3. How little reason is there to boast of our works ! There is nothing we can do, can be accepted for its own worth. If it be accepted, the meanness of it is seen, the soul is humbled, and no acceptance of it is looked for, but for the sake of Christ. If we be so conceited of our work, as to boast of it ; it is an evidence that God accepts it not ; hence said our Lord unto the Pharisees, Luke xvi. 15. *Ye are they which justify*

justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.

4. What will come of them, that do nothing in the service of God at all; but live in the habitual neglect of known duties, are prayerless, flighters of the means of grace, &c.? 1 Pet. iv. 18. If they that set off to the heavenly city may miss the way, and never reach it; sure those that sit still, and never move that way, will never see it. Many sooth themselves in the neglect of duties, because some that do them walk so unlike them: but the case of such is very dangerous: for no habitual neglecters of duties can be saved; and it is in vain for men to make the practice of others an excuse for evil doing.

5. *Lastly,* Take heed how ye perform duties, and satisfy not yourselves with the bare performance, without being solicitous as to the manner, Luke viii. 18. Better is one duty so managed, as to be accepted, than a hundred otherwise: as one piece of gold is more worth than a hundred counters. But this brings me to

Doctr. II. It should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God.

In handling this point, I shall,

- I. Shew what is the acceptance of our works with God.
- II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.
- III. Make improvement.

I. I shall shew what is the acceptance of our works with God. It lies in these two things.

1. His being pleased with them, Col. i. 10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.* The accepted work God approves of, and is well pleased with. Though the saints do no works that they are every way pleased with themselves; yet there are

are some works of theirs that are very pleasing to God. He delights in them, Prov. xv. 8. They are sweet to him, as honey to the mouth, Cant. v. 1. They are sweet as music to the ear, and as beauty to the eye, Cant. ii. 14.

This presupposeth them to be good, and agreeable to his will. For evil cannot be pleasing to him, Psal. v. 4. He who is goodness itself, can never be pleased but with what is good, Heb. xiii. 16. The unregenerate do nothing good; Psal. xiv. 2. 3. and so nothing they do is accepted, Heb. xi. 6. The saints do some things good, some things evil; the good is accepted, and the refuse is cast away.

2. His taking them off their hand, as service done to him. God testified his acceptance of the sacrifice by fire, Lev. ix. *ult.* for the fire made them go up in flames towards heaven, Judg. xiii. 20. See Psal. xx. 3. Gen. iv. 4. 5. So he received them off their hand. He reckons such a work a piece of service done to him, sets it down as it were in his book, in due time to give it a reward of grace, Lev. vii. 18. Mal. iii. 16.

Hence is the after-notice God takes of the good works of his people: In time, as it fared with Moses, who refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, was afterwards advanced to be king in Jesliurun. In eternity, as Matth. xxv. He will not forget any of them, Heb. vi. 10. but a plentiful sowing of them will have a plentiful reaping. So they are the surest riches, 1 Tim. vi. 18. Not that the reward is given for their sake, but for Christ's sake: and such is the covenant connection.

Quest. How can any of our works be accepted of a holy God, or he be well pleased with them, &c. since there is so much sinfulness attending the best of them?

Answe. 1. In point of justification they are not, nor cannot be accepted; i. e. our persons cannot be accepted as righteous for our works, since they are not legally perfect, perfect in every point. In the way of the

the covenant of works, the work was first to be accepted for its own sake, as absolutely perfect; and then the person for the work's sake. So that whosoever seek by their works to be accepted of God, they go back to the covenant of works; and must either bring works every way perfect, or be rejected: and because they cannot do such works, *therefore by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*, Gal. ii. 16.

2. In point of sanctification the good works of the justified may be accepted; i. e. one's person being accepted, his works may be accepted, being evangelically perfect, though not legally; being perfect in parts, though not in degrees. For in the way of the covenant of grace, the person is first accepted in Christ, and then his work though imperfect. Hence it appears,

(1.) That to a person's being accepted of God in Christ, there is no working, but believing required, Mark v. 36. For till the person be accepted of God in Christ, he can do no acceptable work. He can yield no savoury fruit till he be ingrafted by faith in Christ.

(2.) That the way to bring sinners to good works, is to bring them to Christ in the first place by faith, that they may be justified and accepted in him. Men may be made proud legalists otherwise, but not evangelical Christians; whitened sepulchres, but still full of rotteness.

(3.) That there is very good reason why the good works of unbelievers are rejected, because they are imperfect; and yet the good works of believers are accepted, though they be imperfect. For besides that the principle, motives, and ends of their works are vastly different, there is a great odds between,

[1.] Their states. The one is the King's friend, the other an enemy; the one the King's son, the other but his hired servant. If a man is pleased with a little piece of service that his own child does him, can the hired servant expect that as little will be taken

taken off his hand? Can our enemy expect the same acceptance of his service, as our friend?

[2.] The desired acceptance. The unbeliever desires his work may be accepted for his salvation; but the believer desires his work may be accepted as only a token of his gratitude to his Saviour, who has saved him already. Can any man rationally think, that as little can be accepted off his hand, for the price of salvation, as may be accepted for an acknowledgement of salvation received?

But further to clear this question, consider,

1. Even the acceptance in point of sanctification, is not for the sake of the work itself, nor for the worker's sake neither; but for Christ's sake, and by the means of his intercession. This is clear from the necessity of Christ's intercession to the acceptance of our works: and that intercession being a pleading of the merit of his own obedience and death, Col. iii. 17. Rev. vii. 14. and viii. 3. It is for the same merit of Christ, that first the believer himself, and then his imperfect works are accepted of God.

2. The sinfulness and imperfections that attend the works of the believer, are not, nor cannot be ever accepted. God is displeased and angry with the dross of sin that cleaves to the believer's best performances; and he never is so well pleased with the good in them, as to accept the ill too. Yea, he may write his indignation against these, when he is pleased with the substance of the work.

3. The main of the accepted work is good, however sinfulness attends it. For the matter of it, it is commanded; for the form of it, it proceeds from a right principle, the love of God; it is done in faith; and to the glory of God. And this is the work of God's own Spirit in the believer: the weaknesses that attend it, proceed from the believer himself. And such works as are good in the main, God will not reject, for the infirmities that attend them. As for those

those works even of believers that are not thus good in the main, they are not at all accepted.

4. Christ separates the precious from the vile part, and offers the former perfumed with his merit unto the Father for acceptance, Heb. x. 21. 22. Rev. viii. 3. In every sacrifice, there were two very different things, the flesh, and the skin and dung. The former came to the altar, the latter never. So Christ separates in a believer's duties, that which is from his own Spirit, and that which is from the believer himself; puts away this, and presents that to his Father. This was lively represented in the burning of the incense, where the fire being set to it, the finer part went up in flame and smoke, towards heaven; and the gross part, the ashes, remained, and a priest came and carried them away in a golden dish. So is the case here: the finer part in the saints services, that which is done by the assistance of the Spirit and in faith, ascends to heaven for acceptance; and the ashes that remain, are carried away, in virtue of the free promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

5. Lastly, The Father then accepts the precious part for the Son's sake, and for the same sake pardons the guilt of the vile part, the infirmities attending it, Rev. viii. 4. Psal. cxli. 2. The accepted duties go through two hands, first the believer's, then Christ's; their prayers are first said on earth by themselves, then they are repeated in heaven by the Mediator. It is from the second hand only, and on the repetition only, that they are accepted, 1 Kings viii. 32.; and in the second hand, and on the repetition, they are not so bulky, but better.

II. I shall next give the reasons of the point, That it should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God. Because,

1. As God is the first cause, so he is the chief end of all things, Rom. xi. ult. *For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* So as we are his creatures,

creatures, our chief end in all our duties should be to please him : as all the waters coming from the sea, do return to it again. This was the duty of Adam in the covenant of works, as sure as he was not to have another God, as in the first command ; though he was to gain life by his works, which we are not, and therefore it is surely ours much more.

2. Our duties are a matter of gratitude ; we owe them to God, not only in point of justice, but thankfulness, for benefits received, creation, preservation, and redemption, Exod. xx. 2. *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* We are in debt to him ; and we cannot pay, but only acknowledge by small tokens, Hos. xiv. 2. If we are to offer to a fellow-creature, a token of our obligation to him, the first question is, “ What is it that I can give, that will be most acceptable to him ? ” How much more should the first question be, “ What is it that I can give, that will be most acceptable to God ? ”

3. God looks mainly to the heart with which a duty is done, and knows whether he gets it or not, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Though a servant do well, yet if he hath no regard to his master’s pleasure in what he does, it is disobliging : and whatever men do, if it is not their main aim to please God, it is provoking. Our aims may be hid from men ; but they are as open to God as our ouvert actions.

4. *Lastly,* It is a necessary ingredient in a good work, so that a work cannot be good without it, 1 Cor. x. 31. For such a work is pointed wrong as to the end of it, Zech. vii. 5. It is a sacrifice wanting the heart, the thing that God mainly requires and delights in, Prov. xxiii. 26. So whatever we may account it, God will not account it a good work.

I come now to the practical improvement of this doctrine ; which I shall discuss in a twofold use, viz. of conviction, and of exhortation.

USE I.

USE I. This doctrine may serve for conviction, humiliation, and reproof to men, who generally are strangers to it, and at best very defective in it. It may convict men,

1. In point of ill works. These are fruitful in the world, things that are altogether evil, and cannot be good, Gal. v. 19. In the midst of gospel-light they overflow, and there is no true repentance for them, because there is no reformation. To such workers I would say,

(1.) How far are ye from regarding at all God's acceptance of your works, who take the liberty to do against the letter of his law, what ye know his foul abhors? The drunkard, swearer, sabbath breaker, or unclean person, is not so abandoned, as to think, that these his actions can please God. But the truth is, the pleasing of God is what he is not anxious about, but he is resolved to please himself in his lust, let his Maker take it as he will. What must be the end of these things? Rom. i. 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

(2.) Ye thereby evidence, that it is not the pleasing of God, but yourselves, that ye seek in your good works: and that therefore your ill works and your good works will all go one way, being rejected of God; your swearing and your praying, &c. will be reckoned all one. If it were your main design in one thing to please God, it would be so in all, Jam. ii. 10. 11.; and therefore since ye do not endeavour to please him in all, know that ye can please him in nothing, Psal. cxxv. ult. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*

2. In point of good works, namely, those that for the matter of them are good, wherein men may be accepted of God, if they rightly manage them. These are of three sorts.

1st, Natural good works, such as eating and drinking,
K k

ing, sleeping, &c. I call them good works, because they are commanded of God, are necessary to be done, and it would be sin to omit them. They are duties of the sixth command, the neglect whereof is sinful, Col. ii. ult. and one may be accepted of God in them, Rom. xiv. 3. or rejected of him, Zech. vii. 6. Bring these works of ours to this rule, That it should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God; and how may we stand convicted! of,

(1.) **Regardlessness of God's approbation and acceptance in these things;** having no eye to God in them, but going about them, as men without God in the world, or as beasts, Matth. xxiv. 38. without any regard to God's command requiring our use of them, dependence on God for the benefit of them, or design to be strengthened by them for serving of God in the duties of religion and our particular calling.

(2.) **Dishonouring of God in them.** In the way of purchasing them, many an ill shift is made for the belly; and if men can get it, to satisfy the appetite, they are not anxious about their right to it before God, whether it be with a good conscience their own bread, got with honest labour and industry, 2 Thess. iii. 12.; or whether doing their utmost with their industry, they have a right to it as charitable supply. In the way of using them, without conscientious moderation, by gluttony or drunkenness; a sinful eagerness to satisfy a lust for them; and unfitting themselves for the service of God by them.

It is but a little the time of eating and drinking will last: there is an eternity to be spent without them. If we endeavour to be accepted of God in them while they last, it will be our comfort when we shall for ever lay them aside; if not, the regardlessness and dishonouring of God in them, will be an eternal sting in the conscience.

2dly, Civil good works, which are the duties of mens station, in the common affairs of this life; such

as the management of family-affairs, the duties of service, of a man's lawful trade or employment. These are good works on the matter, being commanded of God, and in which one is to walk with God, 1 Cor. vii. 24.; and therein one may be accepted, Eccl. ix. 7. or rejected, Prov. xxi. 4. Here again men may be convicted of,

(1.) *Regardlessness of God's acceptance*, Luke xvii. 28. These things mostly are managed without any eye to God, or to be accepted of him in them. His command and call by his providence unto them is not waited for; or if men have it, yet they do not regard it, to go about their business under a sense of God's command, Eph. vi. 7. The Lord is not looked to for direction, but men trust themselves for conduct in these matters, Prov. iii. 5. 6. He is not depended on for success, but men are either flushed with presumptuous confidence, or tormenting anxiety, as to events, Psal. cxxvii. 1. And not God's word is the rule they act by in them, but their own worldly interest or ease.

(2.) *Dishonouring God in them*. As by pride, passion, and selfishness, which are to be found in people's managing of their family-affairs: if they get their business done, there is no concern how their families should serve the Lord. He is dishonoured by the unfaithfulness, dishonesty, eye-service, and perverseness of servants; and dishonoured by the lying, cheating, and injustice used by men in their dealings in their several employments.

These things are but time-things either: and all the hurry of worldly business will be hushed ere long; and death will draw the busiest man out of the throng, as clean as if he had never been in it, Eccl. ix. 6. It will be your interest to seek to be accepted of God in them; otherwise ye will lay up bitterness from them, that will be lasting when they are gone for ever.

3dly, Religious good works, the duties whether of the first or second table, which are duties of our

Christian calling, such as prayer, giving alms, &c. In them also men may here be convicted of,

(1.) Regardlessness of God's acceptance in them. Men proclaim this, by their rash approaching to them, without considering what they are to be about, Eccl. v. 1.; by their formality in them, satisfying themselves with the doing of the thing, without any anxiety to get their hearts up to the duty, to do it in a right manner; which is mere bodily exercise, 1 Tim. iv. 8.; and their carelessness after them, unconcernedness as to their success, when once the task is off their hand, Psal. v. 3.

(2.) Making other things our main concern in them: As, [1.] A name for religion, Math. vi. 2. An unholy heart, that is an enemy to religion at bottom, may be very fond of a name for it. And to advance this empty name, many times good gifts are prostituted, and enlargements in duty, and great performances for God: all of them running in that channel of ambition, to be highly esteemed of men as religious. [2.] Some worldly interest, John vi. 26. 27. So it was with Jehu. They will please men for their carnal interest, and do religious duties to please men. Often doth the fear of men go deeper here, than the fear of God; and the loss of some worldly interest, deeper than the loss of the soul. [3.] Peace in their own minds. There is a conscience within men, that will drive to duty, when there is no love to God drawing: so men by such duties rather seek to please themselves, than to please God. And, 1.) To keep conscience quiet, while it is quiet: so duties are made a bribe, to cause conscience hold its tongue. And certain it is, that many could not live so quietly in their sins as they do, were it not for their duties, as appears from the case of the adulterous whore, Prov. vii. 14, 15. This is the reason that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees; and Laodicea's case was the most hopeless of all the seven churches. 2.) To still

it

it again, when it is roused, Psal. lxxviii. 34. Men may be very anxious for comfort by duty, that have no concern for sanctification thereby. [4.] Salvation from hell and wrath, Matth. xix. 16.—20. One may follow duties on this account, without any love to God, as appears ver. 22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Self is a strong motive, and heaven and hell are strong arguments for duty: but the misery is, they seek not God for himself, but for themselves, and so are rejected, 2 Tim. i. 7.

In these duties we are now on our trials for heaven: in a little the sentence will be passed, according to our works. And those who are not now accepted of God in their duties, will then be rejected of God for ever.

USE II. Let it be your main concern in your works, that they may be accepted of God; whether they be natural, civil, or religious. For motives, consider,

1. This is a distinguishing character of one's state, whereby ye will prove yourselves either gracious or graceless. It is a native result of justification and acceptance of one's person with God, to be mainly concerned for God's acceptance of them in their work, 2 Cor. v. 9. So Noah's integrity and uprightness is traced to his justification as the source, Gen. vi. 9. For so the love of Christ constrains. Whereas the soul being in a state of enmity with God, natively issues in no concern to please him.

2. God is a great God and King, infinitely above the greatest on earth: he cannot be profited by our services, but requires us to labour to please him in them, Mal. i. 14. He gave us our being, and hath put each of us in our station, and carved out our work for us: whence it necessarily follows, that it should be our main concern to please him, 2 Tim. ii. 4. And would men more narrowly consider this, that it is God that has set them their busines and sta-

tion, and consequently, that he will call for the account of our work ; it would stir them up to make it their main care in their works, that they may be accepted of him.

3. There is a costly provision of an altar on which our sacrifices of praise may be accepted, Heb. xiii. 10. 15. There was nothing a sinner could have done that could have been accepted, had there not been an altar to sanctify the gift. Now it is provided, a crucified Christ is that altar ; he by his death has become a proper intercessor for acceptance, both of our persons, and our works. How hainous will our sin be, if we seek not to bring our gift to this altar, for acceptance with God ?

4. Whatever good work, natural, civil, or religious, we do, may be accepted of God, as pleasing service to him through Christ, Heb. xiii. 15. 16. Men are hugely mistaken to think, that it is only works strictly called religious, that God accepts as service to him : nay whatever God calls for at thy hand, as to tend the sheep, as well as to attend his worship, if thou act in it to please him, and offer it to him for acceptance through Christ, it will be accepted, Col. iii. 23. 24. It is observable, that the apostle having given that general direction, ver. 17. *Whosoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, &c.* falls immediately on relative duties, ver. 18. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, &c.*

5. The example of Christ may be very moving here, Rom. xv. 3. *For even Christ pleased not himself.* His work was heavy work, but to please his Father he undertook it, set about it, and went through with it, John viii. 29. Psal. xl. & John iv. 34. And shall not we be concerned to please him in our imperfect works, to please whom Christ laid down his life ?

6. If ye be mainly concerned for acceptance with God in your work, ye may expect help from the Lord in it. The waters and rivers run all to the sea, and so they are fed again by the sea, that they never run dry.

dry. That work that has God's pleasure for its end, will get God's hand to it for its help, Phil. ii. 12. 13. Prov. iii. 6. The man that slighteth God in his natural and civil actions, provokes God to leave him in them, Josh. ix. 14. and then his own understanding that he leaned to, proves folly. And he that slighteth God in his religious duties, does the same; and his gifts prove a broken reed.

7. Whatever be the success of your work, ye will have solid peace, satisfaction, and comfort, in your having been mainly concerned in your works for God's acceptance, Is. xlix. 4. Men are great fools, to promise themselves success on their own wise management of their natural and civil actions. It has been a truth from the beginning, and will be to the end of the world, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill*, Eccl. ix. 11. And it is equally foolish to expect the world's thanks for doing them a good turn; for ye will be fair to be disappointed, 2 Tim. iii. 1. 2. and look blunt on the disappointment. Nay, such an ill-natured world it is, that it is one to a thousand if they be not heavy on you for it. For, says Solomon, Eccl. iv. 4. *I considered all travel, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour.* But when this is one's main concern, he has what he looked for, 2 Cor. i. 12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshy wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards.*

8. If ye do not thus, your works will be lost; lost with God, and lost for eternity; and if that be, all that ye will find of them in the world, will be little worth, Matth. vi. 2. This is our sowing time, good works are the seed: will it not be sad to lose all, so as in the harvest ye have nothing to reap? So it will be,

be, if in this your sowing time ye do not throw in the seeds of good works, and make it your principal concern to look for acceptance with God in them; all ye do will be lost for ever, ye will have nothing to reap in the harvest at the last day.

9. *Lastly*, If ye do not, your best works will be turned to sin, Prov. xv. 8. and ye will be surprised to find so many actions of yours that ye set down in the roll of good works, appear in God's book in the roll of sins; as cockle instead of barley. There is such a thing, Psal. cix. 7. *Let his prayer become sin.*

For direction in this point, we proceed to

Doct. III. Where there is a willing mind carrying out a man to do and serve the Lord, to his ability, what is so done is accepted of God.

Here I shall shew,

I. What sort of works they are that are accepted of God.

II. How or in what respect they are accepted.

III. Why they are so.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what sort of works they are that are accepted of God.

FIRST, They are works done with a willing mind. Wherein we are to consider,

1. What this willingness relates to.

2. What it is.

First, Let us consider what this willingness relates to. This willingness of the soul respects the will of God, as that which the soul is willing to comply with. The will of God is contained in his commands, summed up in a word, 1 Thessl. iv. 3. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification*; and it is the duty of all of us to be willing to that will of God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. and to say as Psal. xl. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God.* Hence,

1. A work accepted of God is a commanded work, required of us by God himself, and not an unrequired work, Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments.* Matth. xv. 9. *In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Therefore,

(1.) Nothing in itself sinful can ever be accepted of God; though people may pretend they have no ill in their mind against God in doing it; yea though they may have a good intention in it to serve God by it, John xvi. 2. Yet how many do, on these pretences, lie without any check, and do other ill things? Prov. xxvi. 18. 19. *As a mad-man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death: so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?*

(2.) Nothing, that is not required of God, though it be not in itself sinful, can be accepted of him, Matth. xv. 9. For there can be no obedience, where there is not a command; these are relatives. If God command us not, we cannot be said to obey him, nor be accepted of him. Hence, [1.] Will-worship is false worship, and service to God just of mens own devising is not, nor can be accepted, Col. ii. 21. 22. 23. *Devised of one's own heart,* is a brand of rejection fixed on a work, that is not in itself evil, 1 Kings xiii. ult. And Saul lost the kingdom on such a work, 1 Sam. xv. 21. [2.] Doing a duty not the duty of one's station cannot be accepted, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It was a duty to sacrifice, and to burn incense; yet Saul provoked the Lord by his doing the one, and Uzziah was smitten with leprosy for doing the other: because though they were duties, yet they belonged not to their stations. In a well-ordered family, one servant must not take his neighbour's work and post.

2. The command of God requiring the work must be known to the doer; for otherwise men serve the Lord but at a venture, not knowing whether it be his will or no, which can never be accepted, Lev. xxvi. 21.

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The acceptable work must be done in faith, faith of the command of God, implying knowledge of it, Rom. xiv. ult.

The sum of the whole lies here. If ye would have your work accepted of God, ye must (1.) Know it to be a commanded duty. (2.) Commanded to you. The want of either will mar the acceptance, as a duty not proceeding from a willing mind.

Secondly, Let us consider what this willingness of mind is. It is twofold, habitual and actual.

1. Habitual; which is a disposition of the soul to comply with the will of God's commands, arising from the new nature given in regeneration or the saving change, Heb. viii. 10 *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.* Psal. cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning.* The carnal unrenewed mind is enmity against God and his law, Rom. viii. 7. And while that corrupt set abides on the heart predominant, as in all natural men, there can be no true willingness to comply with the will of God. Hence, that any work of ours may be accepted of God, we must be,

(1) United to Christ by faith, John xv. 5. While we continue in our natural state, growing on the old stock of the first Adam, we can bring forth no fruit acceptable to God: for the whole nature is corrupt according to the stock, and so must the fruit be, Rom. vii. 5. Particularly there is a reigning refractoriness in the will, whereby the soul is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke of God's will. Whereas the soul being in Christ is changed, according to the nature of the new stock, and made willing, 2 Cor. v. 17. and gets his image, opposed to Adam's, 1 Cor. xv. 49.

(2.) We must be regenerated, and have our nature changed. The tree must be made good, before the fruit can be so, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. How can there be a willing mind for duty, while the will is unrenew-

ed?

ed? How can there be new obedience, while one is not partaker of the new nature? The dark mind, the perverse will, and disorderly affections, not rectified by regenerating grace, being all of them opposite to good, shew the want of a willing mind.

(3.) We must have a predominant love to God, 1 Tim. i. 5. This disposeth the soul, by a constraining force, to fall in with whatsoever the Lord requires; and constitutes one's obedience labour of love. And where it is wanting, good things may indeed be done, for some by-ends, and from some by-principles: but there is not first a willing mind.

This is the habitual willing mind, whereby the soul being in Christ, regenerated, and having the love of God dwelling in it, is in such a disposition to fall in with the will of God, that getting a touch of a particular command, it readily complies therewith in obedience.

2. Actual; which is an actual compliance of the heart, with such and such a particular duty, laid before one at such a time and in such a place; and ariseth from the habitual disposition. The one looks to the whole law; the other to particular commands requiring such and such a particular duty, as of the Corinthians to help the poor saints of Judea. And it implies,

(1.) An approbation of the command of God for the duty. What the Lord by his word and providence requires of the man as duty, he has a love and liking of it from the heart, Rom. vii. 12. The carnal heart rises against this and the other command laying such a duty on the man; and he takes it on as a slave does his burden, because he cannot help it. But the willing mind has a liking of it, 1 John v. 3. as the little child has a liking of being bid do any little piece of service for his father.

(2.) A sincere resolution to set to the work in the season thereof, Josh. xxiv. 15. Psal. cxix. 106. The willing mind goes not about to seek how to shif obedience

dience to the divine call ; nor does it seek offputts and delays, till the season of the duty is away ; nor does it muster up difficulties, saying, *There is a lion in the way*, to palliate disobedience ; but resolves to put to hand timely, Psal. cxix. 60. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

(3.) A compliance of the heart with the command to the duty, because it is God's command, Psal. cxix.

4. The authority of God has weight with the man's conscience ; and the love of God inclines his heart to obey. So the will of God is the reason, as well as the rule, of his obedience. As he believes the promise, because God has said it ; so he obeys the command, because God has bid it. So the man's great aim is to answer the call of God, and please him.

(4.) A delight and cheerfulness in the duty, If. Ixiv. 5. 2 Cor. ix. 7. Love to the Lord oils the wheels of the soul, and the work goes on, not as of necessity, but as of choice, 1 John v. 3. The awfulness of the command is veiled with prevailing love : take off the threatening of wrath from the command, and the willing soul would not flinch for all that ; for the love of God in the heart is a law, and a powerful one too, Cant. viii. 6. Terror drives to duty, but weakens ; love draws to duty, and strengthens, 2 Tim. i. 7. Terror will make men find their hands, but they lose heart ; but loves gives heart and hand too.

(5.) A design to honour God by the duty. The general direction is plain, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God :* and thereto the willing mind echoes back, *To me to live is Christ*, Phil. i. 21. The willing mind is not obtained but by faith, whereby the conscience is made good, and the soul put in a state of salvation : hence natively follows the design of glorifying God by good works, and by them adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The faith of Christ's salvation makes a powerful impression of gratitud

gratitude on the soul, that it is glad of an occasion to glorify him, and express its love, Psal. cxvi. 12. *What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?*

(6.) *Lastly,* A looking out for promised help to the duty, by faith, Heb. xii. 1. 2. The willing mind is not blind to its own weakness, but sees that better than others. But what one is really willing and hearty for the doing of, he will use all means for reaching his end. Carnal men say, they are willing, but they cannot: in that they deceive themselves; for if they were really willing, they would go to the fountain of strength for help. So do they with whom is first a willing mind, they set about the duty in the faith of the promise. Hence they will go forward on God's call, however difficult the work be, and get through too; as the women came to the sepulchre, though not knowing how the stone would be rolled away.

SECONDLY, They are works, that from a willing mind are done to their ability. We may take up this in these four things.

1. They are works, which, people having ability for, are done: they are not merely wished and woulded to be done, as the sluggard uses to wish well with folded hands, Prov. xxi. 25. For where the heart is to a work, the hand will be put to it, so far as in them lies. Men do but deceive themselves, who please themselves with good desires and wishes, without endeavours backing them, Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Jam. i. 22. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

2. They are done according to the ability they could get in. That is, not only according to the ability in hand, but the man labours to get more ability for the work, whereby he may be fitted for it.

We are naturally impotent for any good work; but there is a storehouse of strength opened to us in Christ, to be brought in by faith, Is. xlvi. 24. Wherefore they that are not concerned to fetch in strength for duty; but are unable for duty, and hold themselves so, will not be accepted: for there is no willing mind there.

3. They are not done quite below what they might have done, and was in the power of their hand, Is. xxxii. 5. Where there is an utter disproportion betwixt one's ability and service, it cannot be accepted, but that service brings a curse instead of a blessing, Prov. xi. 24. Hence a certain quantity of service may be accepted off one's hand, that will not be accepted off another's, Luke xii. 48. Where God gives much, he requires the greater returns.

4. *Lastly,* They are works wherein the willingness of the mind carries out the hand to do, as far as it can reach, 2 Cor. viii. 3. The willing mind loves to serve the Lord, and to serve him liberally; and so carries a man to do to his power.

II. The next general head is to shew, how or in what respect such a work is accepted. God accepts such works,

1. As obedience to him, and a doing of his will Matth. xxv. 21. As the willing mind is peculiar to those within the covenant of grace, so it is the privilege of those in that covenant, to have their works so done accepted, though imperfect. There is not one piece of obedience they can do, that is perfect, or could be sustained as obedience according to the covenant of works: but God in Christ, in virtue of the covenant of grace, accepts such imperfect works as obedience pleasing to him, Acts xiii. 22.

2. As a token of their love to God, Heb. vi. 10. A love-token is accepted, though not great, if according to the ability of the giver: especially with God, who looks more to the heart it is given with than

than the gift. Some offered gold and precious stones for the service of the tabernacle; some but goats hair and ram-skins: the latter as well as the former was accepted, where they gave according to their ability with willingness.

3. So as to be rewarded, 1 Cor. xv. ult. As believers good works are tokens of their love to God, so God gives them tokens of his good pleasure with their works, not of debt, but of grace. To those that improve the abilities they have, he oft-times gives more ability, *To him that hath shall be given.* However, accepted good works are a seed, that will never miss a rich harvest, sooner or later.

III. I proceed to shew why such works are accepted. It is not for their own worth ; for the best works of the saints are attended with such sinfulness, that they could not be accepted in the eye of the law ; but have in them more than sufficient matter of condemnation, If. lxiv. 6. But they are accepted through special privilege.

1. Being sanctified through the Spirit, Rom. xv.
16. Every work of ours is defiled by us, being in ourselves unclean creatures: but the Spirit works in believers, sanctifying them and their works. And he sanctifies their works, by influencing them to work and in their work; exciting them, giving gracious abilities: particularly working in them that approbation and liking of the command, that resolution to set about the work, that compliance of the heart with it, that delight and cheerfulness in the duty, that design to honour God by it, and that looking out for promised help, which I have spoke of before, and causing them to offer their works to God through Christ.

2. They are presented for acceptance, by the Mediator, to the Father. Christ is the believer's resident in the court of heaven, managing all their matters there by his intercession, Heb. vii. 25. He takes

their imperfect works, perfumes them with the merit of his obedience and death, and gains their acceptance with the Father, according to the covenant of grace, Rev. viii. 3. 4. The sum of the matter lies here; they are the work of his own Spirit in his children, presented for acceptance by the Son, and so they are accepted of the Father, Eph. ii. 18.

USE. From what is said, we may draw the two following inferences.

1. See here of what concern it is to get the heart up to every duty, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. The doing of the bare work is of small account with God; and where there is not a heart to it, God regards it not. A good work done grudgingly, whatever use it may be for among men, is an ill work in God's sight.

Quest. How may one get up his heart to every duty?

Answ. (1.) Accept of Christ's free salvation by faith, that ye may be brought into a state of salvation. We have a spirit of slaves, a backwardness to good, derived from Adam. It is from Christ we must get the spirit of sons, and the willing mind, uniting with him by faith, John i. 16. Faith trusting on Christ for salvation to be received freely, works that willingness of mind.

(2.) Exercise faith for every duty anew. Believe the promise, [1.] Of assistance by the Spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. In the covenant of grace commands are turned to promises, as Deut. x. 16. *Circumcise the foreskin of your heart.* Compare Deut. xxx. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart.* Every call to duty implies a promise of assistance. The belief of this makes willing, Phil. ii. 12. 13. [2.] Of acceptance through Christ. The apostles work was heavy, but that made them willing, 2 Cor. ii. 15. *For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* It is hard

to be willing to a work, which one does not believe will be accepted.

2 See of what concern it is to put hand to every duty commanded us, and to do in it according to one's power; and not to content ourselves with lazy wishes as some do, and flack and scrimp performances as others, Eccl. ix. 10. Neither will to wish and do nothing be accepted; nor, to do but do niggardly. It is not in every case that God will accept the will for the deed.

If, God will not accept the natural or unregenerate man's will for the deed, in any case. For such a one is under the covenant of works, and no less than works every way perfect can be accepted off his hand, Gal. iii. 10. But this is a privilege of the covenant of grace, which they are not under, not being in Christ. It is the privilege of sons, but they are but at best hired servants, working for hire, nay slaves, as under the curse. Their persons are not accepted; therefore nothing they are, have, or can do, can be accepted. Therefore deceive not yourselves, looking for this benefit, while ye are out of Christ.

2dly, God will accept no man's will for the deed,

(1.) When they content themselves with wishing only they could do a duty commanded them, but yet never essay it, nor put hand to it, Prov. xxi. 25. The sluggard unwilling to obey, makes a cover for his sloth, of the difficulty and his inability for duty, Prov. xxii. 13. But God will rent off that cover, and shew them in their own colours, Matth. xxv. 14.—30. Men cannot deny but that such a thing is their duty; and they wish they could; but that is all.

(2.) When they do not what is really in their power to do, Rom. i. 20. 21. Mens power is indeed little, but their doing is far less. Men are not as stocks and stones, but there are many things acts of moral discipline, that they may and can do, but they will not. But they grasp at the principle, that they can do nothing, and so fold their hands sitting down contented.

tented. They cannot do all, therefore they will do nothing. But will that be accepted? No, Exod. xiv. 15. The women did not so, Mark xvi. 2. 4.

(3.) *Lastly*, When they do not by faith fetch in grace from the Lord Jesu to strengthen them to duty, 2 Tim. ii. 1. compared with John v. 40. Many a good work is laid by, because of inability, and marred because we can carry it no further: but God will take notice what course is taken for getting in strength for duty. There are full promises lying between us and the full fountain, as the conduit-pipes at which faith is to suck and draw, Is. xl. 29. 30. 31. Assure yourselves, that the will will not be accepted for the deed, while this is neglected. And why should it? Is that man willing to pay his debt, who though he has nothing in hand, yet has a gift lying in a rich friend's hand, but he will not lift it? See the decision, Matth. xxv. 27. *Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

I shall now consider in a few words the last doctrine I offered from the text, *viz.*

Doct. IV. Want of power to do more, shall not mar the acceptance of what is done from a willing mind according to power. In that case, God will accept of his people's will for the deed.

Here I shall shew,

I. In what particular cases God accepts his people's will for the deed

II. Why he does so.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew in what particular cases God accepts his people's will for the deed.

1. Where there is a sincere will to serve him in a piece of work, requiring some external abilities, which are wanting. If it be hindered only by such want,

the

the will is accepted. The disciples would fain have watched more, but the weak body could not bear up with their mind ; and Christ kindly takes notice of it, Matth. xxvi. 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Sometimes Satan makes a rack here to God's children : such a duty they would do, but bodily strength will not answer, and hereupon they are disquieted : but that is from Satan, and their own weakness : for God does not require that external duty from us, that we have no bodily strength for. That is a sweet word, 1 Cor. vi. 13. *The body is—for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* Peter would fain have given to the poor man, but had it not, and it was accepted in the will, Acts iii. 6.

2. When doing the best we can through grace, our work after all is attended with many blemishes : the Lord will not reject it for these blemishes, but accepts the will to do better for the deed, Cant. v. 1. There is a broad cover of Christ's righteousness cast over the believer's spots, that they appear not, Cant. iv. 7. ; and the Lord accepts of the will to that perfection they would be at.

3. Going as far as we have access in a work, but meeting with a providential stop, the will to complete it is accepted for the deed, as if it had been fully done, as in the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac, Heb. xi. 17. There is a great difference betwixt the stops men make in these, and those which God makes : the former argues an unwilling mind, but the latter not so.

4 Services that one really desires, and fain would perform for God, but have not opportunity ; the will to them is accepted for the deed, as in the case of David's purposing to build a house for the Lord, 2 Chron. vi. 8. and the Philippians care about supplying Paul's wants, Phil. iv. 10. Some have opportunities of usefulness, but slight them ; that is their sin : others may have a heart to be so and so useful,

useful, but they cannot have the opportunity; this God accepts.

5. *Lastly,* In services performed with a real desire of success for God's honour and mens good; the Lord accepts the good will to the success denied, as if it had succeeded according to their wish, *If* xlix. 4. 2 Cor. ii. 15. The want of success may mar their present comfort, but neither the acceptance nor reward.

II. Why does God accept such will for the deed?

1. The sincere will to a work is present, which God mainly regards. The person sincerely aims at doing such a piece of service for God, but not attaining what he really desires, his good will thereto being present before the Lord, it is accepted, as if the work had been done.

2. We have a merciful High Priest to present that will for acceptance, notwithstanding all the weaknesses, blemishes, providential hindrances, want of opportunity, and failure of success, that it may be attended with, *Heb. iv. 15. 16.*

3. We have a merciful Father to deal with, *Psal. ciii. 13. 14.* who pities the weaknesses and infirmities of his people, and graciously accepts of their upright designs to serve and honour him.

USE. 1. If the Lord accepts the will for the deed in his own people, then men must answer for the ill they had a will to have done, as if they had done it, *Numb. xiv. 42. 44. 45.* A will and intention to do an evil action, though it be not actually done, is in God's account the same thing with doing it, and will be resented and punished accordingly.

2. God is a gracious master to his servants, taking kindly off their hands through Christ their sincere will to his service, giving them ample testimonies of his regard in all circumstances, and bestowing upon them the special comforts of his grace here, as pledges of the full reward laid up for them in glory hereafter.

Jesu

Jesus Christ the beloved One, and Sinners accepted of God, freely in him.

The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1726.

EPHESIANS i. 6.

—His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

Before our works can be accepted, our persons must; and how that is attained, is here declared.

The apostle taking a view of the state of salvation that believers are brought into, in the fulness of it, ver. 3 runs it up unto the prime author of it, the Father, *ib.* the eternal plan of it in the decree of election, ver. 4. whereof the great design to be accomplished on them, their true sanctification, *ib.* to be begun here, and perfected in glory; the reason of this design, that they were predestinated to adoption into his family, for it was inconsistent with the honour of a holy God, to have unholy children, ver. 5. In this verse are two things.

1. The great end of God's predestinating the elect to be his own children; *the praise of the glory of his grace.* It was a display of his free grace that he aimed at. Grace is love and favour freely flowing, without any thing in the object to draw it out. This grace shown to sinners is glorious grace, like a shining sun, casting such a lustre, as is most admirable and attractive. And it is to be praised by the sons of men: but they that do not see, and do not feel the glory of it, cannot praise it, more than the blind the light of the sun. But God purposed to bring the elect out of the devil's family, and make them his own children

children freely : that they seeing, tasting, and feeling this glorious grace, might raise a song of praise of it here, and joining voices in heaven, might carry it on in the highest strain there for ever, praising the glorious grace appearing in their adoption ; opening the various folds of it, and admiring the glories of free grace, for ever and ever. It is dangerous then to cast a veil over it, doctrinally or practically.

2. A particular fruit of this glorious grace ; *Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* Where we have,

(1.) The fruit itself, the acceptance of the persons of believers with God : *He hath made us accepted.* The acceptor is the *Father*, ver. 3. 5. The accepted are *us*, believers, who are *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*, ver. 3. The acceptance is emphatically expressed. The word is, as if he had said, *he hath graced us* ; and imports not only that he hath accepted us, but freely accepted us, without any thing in us to render us acceptable ; and bears not only free love and favour, but also all kinds of real benefits and favours flowing therefrom, Luke i. 28.

(2.) The way and manner of the acceptance. How can a sinner be accepted of a holy God ? *In the Beloved*, that is, Christ. It is not only for his sake, but God looking on the sinner in Christ, united to him, accepts him. He calls Christ here *the Beloved*, to intimate that the accepting love and favour of God is first pitched on him, and then for his sake comes down on his members : so he is the Beloved by way of eminency. He saith not, *his Beloved*, though doubtless he mainly aims at that, but *the Beloved*, that he might give a vent to that love to Christ that his heart swelled with on the mention of this ; and so uses a general term, whereby Christ might be pointed out as the object whereon the loves of heaven and earth meet together.

(3.) The original spring and source of this acceptance, intimated by the relative *wherein*. It refers not only to the word *grace*, but to the *glory of his grace*,

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¶. d. From, through, and by which glorious grace and free favour, he hath freely accepted us undeserving and ill-deserving creatures; that glorious grace finding a way to accept the sinner, with the good leave of justice, in Christ.

From the text, thus explained, ariseth the following savoury points of doctrine.

DOCTR. I. *Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently-beloved One.*

DOCTR. II. *The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.*

DOCTR. III. *Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.*

DOCTR. I. *Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently-beloved One.*

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew in what respects Christ is the beloved One, eminently.

II. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew in what respects Christ is the beloved One, eminently.

First, He is the beloved of the excellent ones of the earth. Who these are, ye may see Psal. xvi. 3. They are the saints. Him all the saints love with a love above all persons and all things, Luke xiv. 26. And,

1. They meet all together in him in love, however they are scattered through the world; hence is he called, *the desire of all nations*, Hag. ii. 7. So that lovers of Christ and saints are of equal latitude, Eph. vi. 24. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* The American saints and the European saints take him all for their Beloved. As it is the same sun in the firmament that warms all their bodies, it is the same Sun of righteousness, Christ, that warms all their hearts in love. They differ vastly in their

their languages, customs, and particular dispositions; but they perfectly agree in their love of one beloved Jesus, Gen. xlix. 10.—*Unto him shall the gathering of the people be. And so they are knit as one body, whereof Christ is the beloved head.*

2. Each one of them loves him with a superlative and transcendent love, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* They have a general love to mankind, a special love to their respective countries, a more special love to their relations, but the most special and peculiar love, leaving all the rest behind, is to Christ, Luke xiv. 26. In the other they are divided, but in this they meet in one: their beloved ones are very different, but their beloved One is one and the same.

3. They love other persons and things for his sake, Rom. xv. 2. 3. Tit. iii. 3. 4. 5. When the soul is in its natural state, other persons and things have the man's love, but Christ has none of it: when Christ discovers himself in his glory to the soul, then the man hates all in comparison of him: but Christ regulates the soul's love to other things, and takes it not away, but makes it run in another channel, springing from himself. Now other things being loved for him, himself is the best beloved.

4. The liker any thing is to him, they love it the more. Hence the godly that bear his image, are therefore beloved by them; and the more godly they are, the more beloved are they, 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances, because they bear the impress of his authority, his law as the image of his nature; his way and example, because of the tread of his steps therein to be seen. All which bear him to be their eminently beloved. And,

1st, They love him with a love of good-will; and vent it in prayer and praise, Psal. lxxii. 15.—*Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.* It is not in their power to profit him, and

and he needs nothing at the creature's hand, being completely happy in his Father: but they show goodwill to him, in concern for his glory in the world, that his kingdom may prosper, his name spread far and wide, and be perpetuated to all generations.

2dly, They love him with a love of delight and complacency, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you which believe he is precious.* His name and every letter of it is sweet to them, Cant. i. 3. They delight in him as a sister in a brother, a child in a father, and a spouse in a husband. Every thing in Christ is sweet to a believer: therefore they are said to eat his flesh, and drink his blood: for as by eating one finds the sweetness of the meat, and every bit of it, so by faith the soul finds the sweetness of Christ, and every thing in Christ. And,

(1.) They love him for what he is in himself, Cant. v. 10.—16. The glorious excellencies of his person and natures, his attributes and perfections, make him the object of their love. Their hearts are framed to the love of God: so they love him for himself, they love him for that holiness and purity for which carnal men hate him, as the owl doth the sun, Psal. cxx. 4.

(2.) They love him for what he is to them, Cant. v. 16. And as he is best in himself, he is the best to them. They love him for all his offices; for what he has done for them, and for what he will do for them. They love him as the foundation of all their hopes, the scope of all their desires, and the spring of all their joys. And fitly does he go under the name *the Beloved*, even in respect of the saints: for,

[1.] They profess him to be the beloved of their souls: they are not ashamed of their choice. So the spouse calls him, Cant. *per tot.* See chap. iii. 3. *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* as if she would have all to know him by that name, *her Beloved;* supposing there is none so but he.

[2.] They shew him to be so, by their life and

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actions before the world, Cant. viii. 6. 7. Where love to Christ is, it will discover itself, by the soul's preferring Christ to all persons and things, so as to part with any thing, when it comes in competition with him.

Secondly, Christ is the beloved of the glorious ones in heaven. All eyes are upon him there, for he is there the light of the pleasant land, Rev. xxi. 23. as the sun is in this world. And he is there,

1. The beloved of the glorified saints, who now love him in perfection, Rev. vii. 10. Their love to him is now perfected, and they love him with a pure and ardent love. They see him now no more through a glafs; but face to face; they behold the glories of his person; the glories of his actings and sufferings for them; his eternal undertaking, his going through with his undertaking in his birth, life, and death; and the glory he now hath from his Father as the reward. So their love to him is in a continual flame.

2. The beloved of the holy angels, Rev. v. 11. 12. In the temple the cherubims were posted, looking towards the ark or mercy-seat, a type of Christ; which signified the angels looking to Jesus with love and admiration, 1 Pet. i. 12. They behold his glory, and cannot but love him. They love him as the brightness of the Father's glory; as the elder Brother of the family, the heir of all things, and their Lord Heb. i. 6. as the Saviour of sinners, and the head of angels, by whom they and all things do consist, Eph. i. 10.

3. The Father's beloved, Matth. xvii. 5. And here we may consider Christ two ways, as God, and as Mediator.

1st, As God, equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit. He was the beloved of the Father and the Spirit. The scripture teacheth that *God is love*, 1 John iv. 8. and that love must be eminent among the persons of the glorious Trinity one toward another. Thus Prov. viii. 30. he is held out as the

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Creator's delight. See John i. 18. Heb. i. 2. But what our text mainly aims at, is,

2dly, As Mediator, God-man, having a common relation to God and sinners of mankind, as the representative of an elect world, and the bond of union and communion betwixt God and sinners, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

(1.) As such he is the Father's beloved, his prime favourite, and most accepted, his *well Beloved*, Mark xii. 6. in whom he is *well pleased*, Matth. iii. ult. the perpetual rest of his eyes and heart, 2 Chron. vii. 16. And he is his beloved,

[1.] In respect of his person, John i. 18. He is *in the bosom of the Father*. For he is *the brightness of his Father's glory*, Heb. i. 2. The glory of God shines forth in his face, 2 Cor. iv. 6. He is *the image of God* in a peculiar manner, ver. 4. Therefore says he, John xiv. 9. *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*. See Col. ii. 9. & i. 19. So he is the most beautiful object in the eyes of God, in heaven or in earth; and accordingly has the highest place in his love, Heb. i. 13.

[2.] In respect of his office. The Father is well pleased with him in the character he took on. And,

1.) He was well pleased with his undertaking for the great work of sinners salvation. See with what satisfaction he speaks of it, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty : I have exalted one chosen out of the people*. He cordially accepted him as the sinners surety, and took his single bond for all the elects debt, and his security for the injured honour of his name. He was the Father's own choice, and he delighted in his choice, Is. xlvi. 1. He so loved the Undertaker, that,

1.] He promised to be with him, and furnished him with all things necessary for the work, Is. xlvi. 6. & lxi. 1.

2.] He bestowed eternal salvation on many, before the time the Saviour paid the ransom : he set

them free, and gave them their discharge, before the death of Christ. He rested in the Beloved's engagement.

2.) He was well pleased with and accepted him in his carrying on of the work that he had undertaken.—With his birth, therefore the angels were employed to carry the tidings of it, and sung solemnly on that occasion.—With his entering on his public work at his baptism, testified by a voice from heaven, Matth. iii. ult. and all along, testified by his being always with him, John viii. 29.

3.) He was well pleased with his perfecting of the work, by his death and burial. He did in it the most acceptable piece of service to God, that ever was done, John x. 17. His sacrifice of himself was of a sweet favour unto God. He so loved him for it, that he raised him up, and set him on his right hand for ever for it, Phil. ii. 8. 9. and accepts the worst of sinners in him, for his sake.

(2.) As such he is the rest of the Holy Spirit, Is. xi. 2. The Spirit came on the prophets, but he rested on Jesus as the beloved, Matth. iii. 16. All the saints as beloved ones have the Spirit in a measure; but he without measure as the Beloved, John iii. 34. The Spirit is in him as water in the fountain, to be communicated to others, Rev. iii. 1.

I shall conclude this point with a word of application.

USE I. Hereby ye may try whether ye be saints or not, partakers of the divine nature. If so, Christ will be your Beloved, your eminently beloved One; for so he is to the saints, and so he is to God. And if he is your Beloved,

1. Ye will love him above all, Psal. lxxiii. 25. which will shew itself in desiring him above all, praising him beyond all, rejoicing most in his favour, and sorrowing most for the want of him: and in loving other persons and things for his sake.

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2. Ye will hate sin above all things, because it is most contrary to him, his nature and will, Gen. iii. 15. Ye will hate it universally, constantly as to the habitual bent of your heart, and irreconcilably.

USE II. of reproof to those who love him not eminently, above all. It is an evidence, that,

1. Ye know him not, John iv. 10. None can be let into a discovery of Christ in his glory, but must love him, Matth. xiii. 44. 45. 46. It is to the blind world only, there is no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired.

2. That ye are in love with your sins and a vain world. For who would loath the Physician, but he that loves his disease, and cannot part with it?

USE III. Let him be your Beloved then, and give him your heart.

1. He is best worth your love. None has done so much for sinners as Christ has, dying for them. None can do so much for you; he can satisfy the cravings of your souls, and make you happy.

2. If ye love him not, ye will be constructed haters of him, and enemies to him, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maranatha.*

DOCTR. II. *The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.*

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is implied in it.

II. Consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God.

III. The way of it.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what is implied in the doctrine. And there are these things implied in it.

First, A state of non-acceptance, or unacceptableness with God, that sinners are in, while they are

not in Christ. And we may take up this in these following things.

1. They are offenders ; they have finned, and provoked him, Rom. iii. 23. Mens doing their duty, and mens misery, may make them unacceptable to men ; yea one may be unacceptable to another, who cannot shew wherefore, only they cannot endure them. But nothing can make us unacceptable to God, but sin. So the unacceptable to God are undoubtedly sinners, offenders against him.

(1.) They are sinners in Adam, Rom. v. 12. The root was corrupted, and all the branches withered and rotted in him. So his guilt lies on us by nature, we are deprived of righteousness of nature, and instead of that we have derived a corrupt nature from him : all which makes us unacceptable to God by nature.

(2.) They are sinners in their own persons, who are capable of actual finning, Gen. vi. 5. They imitate finning Adam, as well as fall heirs to his offence. The debt left by him on their heads, they do not clear, but increase daily ; they continue their rebellion, while condemned for it. And so they are more and more unacceptable.

2. They are unpardoned offenders. *All have sinned*, but some are pardoned and accepted : but none are pardoned who are out of Christ, John iii. ult. The sentence of the broken law stands in force against all those who are not in him, who has fulfilled the law. He is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. And,

(1.) Their original guilt lies on them, unremoved, unforgiven, 1 Cor. xv. 22. God has never forgiven them their guilt of Adam's first sin, their want of original righteousness, and the corruption of their whole nature. The debt left on them by their father, they were never either able or willing to pay : and though they may have forgot it, God has ne-
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ther forgiven nor forgot it, but it lies on them still, to all effects and purposes of a dreadful pursuit for it.

(2.) The guilt of all their actual sins lies on them, Gal. iii. 10. All the sins they have been guilty of from the first sproutings of corruption in their childhood to this day, are hard and fast on them. None of all their sins of omission or commission, of heart, lip, or life, are forgotten by God, Amos viii. 7. but the accounts are closely kept, Deut. xxxii. 34. Hos. xiii. 12. They may have made a fashion of repenting, and begging pardon, for some of their grosser sins: but since they are not in Christ, there is not one of them blotted out; for *without shedding of blood is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22. and there is no saving benefit of Christ's blood, but by being in him, chap. xii. 24.

3. God is not pleased with them; for his being pleased with any of mankind is in his Son Jesus Christ, and without him he can be pleased with none of them, Matth. iii. ult. Heb. xi. 5. 6. He is not pleased with their persons, nor with any of their works; because they themselves are not in Christ; but yet in the old stock, Rom. viii. 8. and their works are not wrought in him, John xv. 5. So the apostle teacheth, that it was faith that made the difference between Abel's offering and Cain's, Heb. xi. 4.

4. He is highly displeased with them. There is a cloud of divine displeasure ever upon them, John iii. ult. Whatever case they be in, rejoicing or weeping; whatever they be doing, serving God in their way, or serving their lusts; his countenance is never towards them, because they are not in Christ, If. lxvi. 2. 3. There is a displeasure conceived against them, on the justest grounds, not to be removed till they be in Christ.

5. He cannot endure them to have any communion or intercourse with them, farther than in the way of common providence, Psal. v. 5. He and they are at enmity, he legally, they really: so there can be

no communion, Amos iii. 3. And they cannot have it till they come to Christ, John xiv. 6. God may lay common favours to their hand, health, wealth, &c. as the condemned man is allowed his meat till the execution: but he grants them no special saving favours, no peace, pardon, &c. He may allow them to come, and call them into the outer court of ordinances, and make them offers of grace; but they cannot come into the inner court, nor partake of grace, not being in Christ, John x. 9.

6. He loathes them, his soul abhors them, as abominable. They are abominable in their persons unto God, as wholly corrupt and defiled, Tit. i. 15. 16. The whole herd of them is so, Psal. xiv. 3. Their works are abominable, even the best of them, like precious liquor in a filthy vessel, Prov. xv. 8. Sin is the abominable thing unto God, Jer. xliv. 4. And all their sins lie on them, and there is nothing on them to correct the abominable favour of the sinner by them. Sin is abominable in believers too; but the sacrifice of the sweet-smelling favour of Christ corrects it, and is a favour of rest, Gen. viii. 21.

7. *Lastly,* The wrath of God is upon them, and they lie under his curse, John iii. ult. Gal. iii. 10. They are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. There is much wrath on them, and they are liable to more. There is wrath in God's heart against them, in his word, and in his providential dispensations. And if the thread of their life be cut while they are in that state of wrath, they are for ever undone without remedy.

Secondly, A way provided, how sinners may be accepted. The case is not hopeless, but he that is not, may be accepted. The acceptance of some with God is now secured, and cannot be lost. Believers on earth may fall under the frowns of a Father, but never out of the state of acceptance with him; being accepted in the Beloved. The acceptance of the saints in glory is not liable to the least cloud. The acceptance of some, again, is absolutely hopeless. The fallen

fallen angels never can, nor could have been accepted: the damned sometimes might, but can no more now for ever be accepted; they sat their accepted time. But there is a way how sinners in life may be accepted.

1. God is ready to accept of them now, that will come to him in his own way, 2 Cor. v. 19. The Judge of all the earth is set down on a throne of grace, for receiving of sinners into favour: and therefore we have now an *accepted time*, and *day of salvation*, chap. vi. 2.

2. There is ready for sinners what may procure them acceptance with a holy God, Matth. xxii. 4. There is a sacrifice slain and offered, that is of such a sweet-smelling savour, that the most loathsome sinner having the favour of it about him, cannot miss to be accepted.

3. There is open proclamation made in the gospel, that all may have the benefit of that sacrifice, and be accepted of God, 2 Cor. v. 19. Matth. xxii. 4. Who they were whom the Father gave to the Son to be redeemed, is a secret: but the ransom is paid, the sacrifice is offered, for you to lay hold on and be accepted by. And that is the voice of the gospel.

Thirdly, The sinner's bestirring himself for acceptance with God. There is a way to acceptance, but the sinner must take that way, else he will not get acceptance. He cannot sit still careless, and be accepted: he must be where he is not yet, that is, in Christ; otherwise he can have no acceptance. The sinner's bestirring himself in this matter, takes in these three things.

1. A conviction of unacceptableness to God, John xvi. 8. Men must be convinced of their being unacceptable to God, ere they will come to Christ. It is their not seeing their own loathsomeness, that makes them slight the sacrifice of sweet favour; and think to be accepted of God, while yet they are not in Christ.

Christ. And for that cause it is needful they get a sight of God's holiness, and their own vileness.

2. A weighty concern and uneasiness about it. They must not go on to be easy, whether they be accepted of God or not. As long as a man can live contented without it, he will never be accepted. But the soul shall be brought to that, that all shall be helpless without it.

3. Anxiety of heart for it, Acts ii. 37. There must be earnest longings to be accepted of him, yea the soul must be brought to esteem and so prize it, as to be content of it, upon any terms, Acts ix. 6. Not as if these were required to qualify us for acceptance with God; but that without them we will never come into Christ to be accepted in him.

II. The next general head is to consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God: and this I shall do, 1. In itself; and, 2. In its effects and consequents.

FIRST, I shall consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God in itself. And in itself it is a great and unspeakable benefit, and implies these following things.

First, In general, it implies an acceptance of the sinner with God, as a righteous person. A righteous God cannot accept a son of Adam, but as righteous, that is, as being really righteous before him. And so a believer in Christ indeed is, and by faith pleading Christ's righteousness for his righteousness in the sight of God, he is accepted accordingly. The Lord reputes, accounts, and accepts him into favour as a righteous person, 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. iv. 6. & v. 19. So it stands in two things.

1. God's owning and sustaining a righteousness upon the believer, as answering the demands of the law fully, Rom. iii. 22. and holding him a righteous person thereupon. The sinner standing before him in the Beloved, pleading the Mediator's righteousness, the plea is sustained, and God faith, *Deliver him from*

from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job xxxiii. 24. The law gives in its demands against him, of holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin. And it is found that all these demands are satisfied, and that the righteousness upon him fully answers them all, that the law has no more to crave. And so in the very eye of the law, he is through grace held righteous.

2. On the account of that righteousness, he is accepted into favour with God, Rom. iii. 24. 25. It was the sinner's unrighteousness that cast him out of God's favour, and held him out of it. Now that bar is taken away, and the righteousness upon him procures the favour of a righteous God, who loveth righteousness. God is perfectly pleased with that righteousness, as much as ever he was displeased with the party's sin: and he is so well pleased with it, that notwithstanding of all the sins the party ever committed, he accepts him into favour for its sake.

Secondly, More particularly, it implies,

1. The ceasing of wrath against the soul, Hos. xiv.

4. The wrath of God no more abides on the accepted person; that cloud clears. And it clears so, that that shower shall never come on again, nor one drop of it, of revenging wrath, for ever and ever, Is. liv. 9. The small rain of fatherly anger may come on him for his after miscarriages; but the great rain of his revenging wrath shall never return, Cant. ii. 10.

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2. The curse is removed, Gal. iii. 13. That is the sentence of the broken law, that lay on the sinner binding him over to revenging wrath: which seized all mankind in Adam, and which is fortified daily by actual sin, while the sinner is out of Christ. But being accepted in Christ, that is taken away, Rom. viii. 1. The sentence is reversed, ver. 33. 34. the cursed sinner is loosed from that dreadful stake, to which he was tied as the mark for the arrows of God.

3. He is fully pardoned, Is. xliii. 25. The accepted

cepted sinner gets the King of heaven's pardon, under his great seal; whereby his guilt of eternal wrath is for ever removed, as if he had never sinned. God takes the pen, dips it in the blood of the Beloved, and blots out his whole accounts. All his past and present sins are formally pardoned, and all his sins to come are secured not to be imputed to him, for guilt of revenging wrath, Rom. iv. 7. 8.

4. He is reconciled to God, Rom. v. 1. The Lord lays down the legal enmity he bore against that person, never to take it up again: and he gives him peace through the Beloved, Eph. ii. 14. So that though all the world should be at red war with him, he has a firm peace with heaven, that he needs fear no hostilities from that quarter again for ever: which is enough to settle the heart amidst all troubles, Phil. iv. 7.

5. God is pleased with him, Heb xi. 5. Still they are sinners indeed, and God can never be pleased with their sins; but their sins hinder not that he be pleased with their persons in Christ. The prodigal son returns to his father in rags, poverty, and want, with not a shoe on his foot: the father is not pleased with the rags on his son, but natural affection embraces him notwithstanding of his rags, he being his own son. So God embraces the sinner in the Beloved, because he is in him.

6. He is highly pleased with him, Is. xlvi. 21. He is as much pleased with the believer's person, as ever he was displeased with him. He is pleased with him, as one is with his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. as if he saw no sin in them, Numb. xxiii. 21. as if there were no spot on them, Cant. iv. 7. In a word, he is infinitely pleased with them, and can never cease to be so. For the only ground of his being pleased with them, is the Beloved in whom they are, his righteousness which is upon them: and he is infinitely pleased with the Beloved and his righteousness, and they are not liable to any alteration, John xvii. 21. Indeed, if their acceptance

acceptance depended on what is wrought by them, or in them, it could not be so: but it is not set on such a slippery foundation. He is displeased with their sins, and they may smart for them: but the pleasedness with their persons in Christ is not alterable, Col. ii. 10.

7. He admits them into communion with him, 1 John i. 3. The person is let into the inner court, into the chambers of the King, Cant. i. 4. The Lord treats him as a friend, and not as a mere servant, John xv. 15. They are now agreed, and so walk together: and not only agreed, but received into special favour; and are made God's favourites, courtiers of Heaven in the Beloved, in the court kept below, If. lvii. 15. He dwells and walks in them, 2 Cor. vi. 16. and they dwell in him, 1 John iv. 15. Psal. xc. 1.

8. *Lastly,* God hath a delight and complacency in them, If. lxiii. 4. He looks on them in his own Son, and takes pleasure in them, as covered with his righteousness. As Isaac smelling the smell of the elder brother's garments on Jacob; so believers are to God a sweet favour of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15. and therefore he delights in them, whom before he loathed.

SECONDLY, Let us consider this acceptance in its effects and consequents. It is in these an unspeakable privilege. By means of it,

1. The springs of mercy are opened to the sinner, that rivers of compassion may flow towards him, Rom. v. 1. &c. Many look for mercy while unaccepted: but the unsatisfied law will draw a bar betwixt all saving mercy and them. But the believer being accepted, the law's mouth is stopt, and mercy may flow freely.

2. He is adjudged to eternal life, 2 Thess. i. 6. 7. Acts xxvi. 18. Life was promised in the first covenant, upon the fulfilling of the law: now the believer being accepted of God as a righteous person, for

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whom the law is fulfilled, is accordingly adjudged to live for ever.

3. The channel of sanctification is cleared for him, and the dominion of sin is broken in him, Rom. vi. 14. While the sinner is unaccepted, and under the curse, communion with God is stopt, and death preys on his foul : for *the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. As long as the law has a cursing and condemning power over a man, sin reigns in him, like briars and thorns in the cursed ground : but these being removed, sin loseth its strength, and the blessing coming in their room makes him fruitful. So faith sanctifies.

4. He is privileged with peace of conscience. Peace with God makes peace within one's breast, Phil. iv. 7. While one is unaccepted of God, guilt lies on the conscience, which makes a foul and condemning one, that will gnaw like a worm, and blast all outward peace and prosperity : but being accepted, the conscience is cleansed, Heb. ix. 14. and turns a good conscience, that will make one rejoice in trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12.

5. Access to God with confidence, Eph. iii. 12. 1 John iii. 21. God allows them whom he accepts, access to him in duties, that they may come to him, as children to a father, with all their wants, complaints, &c. expecting all from him that is really good for them, Job xxxiii. 24. 26. They are privileged with the hearing of their prayers, communion with him in word and providences, receiving, by the means of grace, light in darkness, strength in weakness, health in sickness, &c.

6. Acceptance of their works, Prov. xv. 8. God accepting a man's person in Christ, does next accept his work, Gen. iv. 4. If it were never such a small work, a cup of cold water given one in name of a disciple, though attended with many imperfections, yet being fruit that grows on a branch ingrafted in-

to Christ, it is accepted of God, as favouring of the flock.

7. The unstinging of afflictions and death, 1 Cor. xv. 55. It alters the very nature of these; afflictions are no more properly penal, but correctory and medicinal, 1 Cor. xxvii. 9. and death perfects the cure. A bee-sting they may have, but the serpentine deadly sting is gone: for the curse is removed out of their crosses, and they are blessings.

8. *Lastly,* All things working for good, Rom. viii. 28. In a state of non acceptance, all things work for evil to a man: his prosperity destroys him; the very gospel is a favour of death unto him, that he draws death out of what others get life. But being accepted, the worst of things tend to his profit, God being for him, nothing can be eventually against him; but whether the wind blow on his back or face, it drives him to the harbour.

III. I proceed to shew the way of a sinner's acceptance with God.

First, It is *freely*. There is nothing in the sinner himself to procure it, or move God to it, Rom. iii. 24. but as the sun shines without hire on the dung-hill, so God accepts sinners of mere grace. It is done freely, in that,

1. It is without respect to any work done by the sinner, Tit. iii. 5. Grace and works are inconsistent in this matter. Men may render themselves acceptable to men, by some work of theirs, that is profitable or pleasant to them: but no work of ours can render us acceptable to God. It is natural for men to think to gain acceptance with God, by their doing better: and when they have set themselves to do and work for that end, they please themselves that they are accepted. But mistake it not, that way of acceptance is blocked up. For,

(1.) All works of ours are excluded from our justification, whereof our acceptance is a part, Rom.

iii. 20. and faith and works are opposed in that matter, ver. 28. Gal. ii. 16.

(2.) Our best works are attended with sinful imperfections, If. lxiv. 6. and mixed with many evil works, Jam. iii. 2. So in them there is ground for God's loathing and condemning us; how then can we be accepted for what is in itself loathsome and condemnable?

(3.) We can do no good works before we be accepted, John ix. 31. Heb. xi. 6. The tree must be good, ere the fruit can be so. The person out of Christ can work no works, but dead works, John xv. 5. for he is, while so, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. And what is all that the man can do before he believe and be accepted in Christ, but a parcel of hypocritical works?

2. It is without respect to any good qualification or disposition wrought in the sinner, Rom. iv. 5. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* Men may be accepted of men, if though they have done nothing, they yet are well qualified for doing, or are agreeable in their disposition: but that is not the way of a sinner's acceptance with God, though the bias of our nature lies that way to expect it. For,

(1.) The way of a sinner's acceptance with God excludes all boasting, Rom. iii. 27. And it is the design of the gospel to exclude it: but if there were a respect to any good qualities in the party accepted, there would be some ground for boasting.

(2.) What good qualities can there be in the sinner before he be accepted in Christ? Heb. xi. 6. It is true he may be touched with a sense of his sin, may be filled with sorrow and remorse for it, and desiring to be delivered: but all these are but legal and selfish dispositions, whereof not God, but self is the end. It is by union with him that gracious qualities must be wrought in the soul, Acts xxvi. 18.

(3.) When the man comes to be endued with grace,

cious qualities, as he is by that time already accepted, so if his acceptance depended on them, he would miss of it; for still they are imperfect, having a great mixture of the contrary ill qualities, that need to be covered another way. And how can one expect acceptance on that, for which he needs a pardon?

Secondly, It is in Christ the sinner is accepted. It implies,

1. The cause of a sinner's acceptance with God. It is for Christ's sake, Rom. iii. 24. 25 *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.* & v. 19.—*By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.* He is the Beloved of the Father, so highly acceptable to him, that sinners are accepted for his sake, Matth. iii. ult. The acceptance of the Mediator is so full, that like the oil on Aaron's head, it runs down to the skirts of his garments. He is the Mediator, that brings in the sinner to the throne of grace, mediates his peace, and procures his acceptance into favour with God. This is,

(1.) The sole cause of the sinner's acceptance with God, Rom. iii. 24. As in purchasing of the sinner's acceptance, so in procuring it, he alone is the actor. No righteousness is mixed with his, no works with his works. God has an eye to none but him, and nothing but him, in accepting the sinner. Some are better than others indeed, before they are accepted: but both are absolutely free grace's debtors for acceptance.

(2.) The full cause, fully proportioned in its efficacy to the acceptance of the worst sinners, Heb. vii. 25. As there is nothing else that can procure our acceptance, so we need nothing else for that end. Corrupt nature reckons it is too great a venture, to lay our acceptance with God on Christ's righteousness alone; and therefore, to make sure work, re-

quires such and such works to be done, and such and such good qualities the sinner is to be adorned with. But what needs wood, hay, and stubble, to be laid in with the Rock for a foundation?

2. The state of acceptableness of a sinner, wherein he may, and will be, and cannot but be accepted of God; it is being in Christ, united to him by faith. One must not think to be accepted for Christ's sake, while out of Christ: no more than the branch of one tree can partake of the sap of another, while not in-grafted into it; or the slayer could be safe, while he was not yet got within the gates of the city of refuge. For,

(1.) Where there is no union with Christ, there can be no communion with him, John xv. 6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.* Can a branch be nourished by the juice of a stock with which it is not knit? Neither can a man be accepted for the sake of Christ's righteousness, while he is not united to him. As it is the marriage with the woman that makes her portion the man's; so it is a spiritual marriage-union with Christ by faith that makes his righteousness actually ours, so as to be accepted for it.

(2.) Christ's salvation is in the event confined to his body, though in the offer it is extended to all. He is the Saviour of the world indeed, John iv. 42. But does he save all the world? No; thousands perish for all that, because they do not unite with him, are not in him. He is the Saviour of the body, Eph. v. 23. His body he actually saves, every member thereof, and none else. He is the Saviour of the world officially, of his body only eventually. An ark there was provided before the universal deluge, but none were saved that were not in it.

(3.) The Father's good pleasure with mankind-sinners goes not without him, Matth. iii. ult. As without the verge of the city of refuge the slayer could expect no protection; so without Christ there is nothing

thing but the curse, wrath, and death. God cannot accept us as righteous, while he sees no righteousness on us: there can be no righteousness on us before God, but as we are in Christ, shaded with his righteousness, 2 Cor. v. 21. Therefore he cannot be pleased with a sinner out of Christ.

(4) Lastly, The covenant of peace reaches not without him, Is. xlix. 8. and there is no acceptance of a sinner but in it. He was the only party-contractor in it, and contracted only for his seed; and it is only by faith uniting with Christ that we are actually in it. Know then that the whole of your salvation lies here. Ye must be in Christ, or ye can have no saving benefit by him. For God will not accept you even for Christ's sake, if ye be not in him.

But in Christ the sinner is in a state of acceptableness to God. We take up this in these five things following.

1. In Christ the sinner may be accepted of God, 2 Cor v. 19. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* There God may, with safety of his honour, meet with the sinner, and receive him into favour. While the sinner is out of Christ, it is inconsistent with the honour of God to accept of him: where is the honour of his justice and holiness, and of his law, if that should be? But the sinner being in Christ, these bars are removed, Matth. xxii. 4.

Reason. Christ has fully satisfied the law, in the name and stead of all his, Rom. x. 4. The law can demand nothing of them, but what it has got of their Surety for them: so justice cannot hinder their acceptance. And it has got,

(1.) Holiness of nature. It is true, it is not in them in their own persons, in the eye of the law: but in Christ as a public person it is; for he was born perfectly holy, brought a holy spotless human nature into the world with him, which was never in the least stained; Luke i. 35. Heb. vii. 26.

(2.) Righteousness

(2.) Righteousness of life. They cannot pretend to it in their own persons: but Christ has furnished it for them, Phil. ii. 8. *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.* All the ten commands had their due from him. His obedience was universal, constant without interruption, voluntary without constraint, and perfect without the least failure in degree or measure.

(3.) Satisfaction for sin. That is quite beyond their reach: but he has satisfied fully, Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Death in all its shapes preyed on him. The forerunners of it met him, at his entrance into the world: it hung about him all his days: in end it came on him with all its joint forces, carried him to the dust of death, kept him in the prison of the grave, till the debt was declared to be completely paid.

2. In Christ the sinner will be accepted. Any, even the worst of sinners shall certainly be accepted in Christ, Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Whosoever shall make their escape into this city of refuge shall be safe. Christ will refuse none that come to him: and God will reject none that are in Christ. Let this be secured, and all is safe.

Read. The promise of the gospel ensures this. The truth of Heaven is plighted for it, that sinners may have all encouragement to come to Christ, John iii. 16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* It is an unalterable statute, that *he that believeth shall be saved*, Mark xvi. 16. The word is full of promises of this nature. See Is. lv. 1. 2. So that as Christ's satisfaction shews it is in the power of a holy God, to accept sinners; the promise of the gospel ascertains it to be his will.

3. In Christ the sinner cannot but be accepted. It is impossible it should fail or miscarry, Heb. vi. 18.

That

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Heaven and earth may pass away sooner, than a sinner in Christ should not be accepted into favour with God.

Reas. There is a right of a third party in this matter, which it is impossible to be balked. It is not only God and the sinner that are here concerned, but the Mediator Christ appears for his interest. In the covenant that passed from eternity betwixt him and the Father, it was promised him, that on condition of his fulfilling all his righteousness, sinners should be accepted in him: he has fulfilled the condition, and so demands it as his own right, to whom the promises were made, Tit. i. 2.

4. That moment a sinner is in Christ, he is accepted, Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* No sooner does the soul come into Christ by faith, but all is safe: the man is in a state of favour with God, the day is risen with him, and the long and black night of the state of wrath is at an end. For then,

(1.) Heaven's offer is accepted as it was made. In the gospel there is an offer of Christ and his righteousness made to the sinner, Rom. i. 17. and of acceptance in him, Acts xiii. 38. The soul by faith coming to Christ, accepts the offer: so the acceptance with God offered, becomes actually his.

(2.) Faith uniting the soul to Christ, upon that union with him follows a communion with him in his righteousness, yea in his fulness; as in marriage there is a communion of goods, 1 John i. 3. So the soul wants nothing to commend it to God for acceptance, having all in its head Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30. Col. ii. 10. The holiness and purity of his birth is theirs; all the good works he did during his life are theirs; and all that he suffered in life and death is theirs. All fulness being united to all emptiness, the

empty

empty creature is filled, and rendered accepted : the transcendent beauty of the Head casts a lustre on all the members.

(3.) The soul pleading Christ's righteousness, and Christ interceding for the soul on that ground, the imputation of it, and acceptance of the person upon it, must immediately ensue. Faith's plea is well bottomed, and cannot be refused : Christ's intercession is always effectual : so the righteousness that is theirs by faith, cannot miss to be reckoned theirs, and they accepted as righteous thereon, 2 Cor. v. 21.

5. *Lastly,* While they abide in Christ, they remain accepted : so their union with him being everlasting, the acceptance of their persons can never be interrupted, John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Rom. viii. 1. It continues in their adversity, as well as prosperity, Job xlvi. 8. Their sins may bring them under heavy strokes, yet still their persons are accepted in Christ, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—34. It continues in death, as well as in life, John xi. 11. and will continue through eternity, Heb. vii. 25. for that righteousness of Christ put on by faith will ever continue on them : their union with Christ can never be dissolved ; and being in Christ, they can never be but accepted.

I come now to the improvement of this subject.

1. Then the door of acceptance with God is open to all : none are excluded, Is. lv. 1. 2. What is given freely, one has access to, as well as another, whatever they have been. Not that God will accept of any, who will continue in their sin, and will not come to Christ ; but that none shall be refused, who will come for acceptance in the method God has laid down.

2. Seek then acceptance with God, that ye may find favour with him. This should be your main aim, 2 Cor. v. 9. Here your happiness lies in time and

and eternity, Psal. xxx. 5. *In his favour is life.* The favour of the world is both insufficient and uncertain: it cannot satisfy in life, much less in death. God is the best friend, and the most terrible enemy: for he is an everlasting friend, and an everlasting enemy too.

3. Seek it freely, without pretending to any thing in yourselves to recommend you to his acceptance or favour. Put no confidence in whole or in part, in your doings, sufferings, attainments, Phil. iii. 7. 8. otherwise ye do put a bar in your own way, and will meet with that, *Thy money perish with thyself.* Mind that this may procure your rejection, and therefore not your acceptance.

4. Seek it through Jesus Christ only, that is, by faith in him, laying the whole stress of your acceptance on his righteousness. The Jews missed it, because they sought it not this way, Rom. ix. 32. No person nor thing else can procure you the favour of God; no righteousness else will cover you: nothing but the blood of the Redeemer can be a covert from revenging justice; nor will any thing else purge the conscience. All other things will be but as a wall of dry boards betwixt you and the consuming fire.

5. Lastly, Therefore as ever ye would have acceptance or favour with God, seek to be in Christ; to be united to him. For as there is no acceptance with God, but for his sake; so there is no acceptance for his sake, but to those that are in him, Col. i. 27. There is salvation in Christ, but none partake of it that are not in him; a righteousness in him; but it covers none, but the members of his body. And,

(1.) This is the only way to be safe in time: for it is the only way to be without the verge of wrath, John iii. ult. And they that are without it are safe, go times as they will, John xvi. ult. While the Lord is threatening a rousing stroke on the generation, the only safety will be in Christ, Micah v. 5. If. viii. 14. & xxvi. 20.

(2.) It is the only way to be safe in eternity, Phil. iii.

iii. 9. We must launch out of time into eternity, and there is no escaping the gulf of eternal wrath, but in him. They that are not in him, must depart from him; and departing from him, they must go into everlasting fire.

Quest. How may we then get into Christ?

Answ. 1. The only way to get into him is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. And faith is the convinced soul's renouncing all confidence in itself, and trusting on him entirely for salvation from sin and wrath, upon the ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise of the gospel. Hereby the soul knits with Christ, hangs on him, depends on him, wholly to stand or fall, according as he shall deal with them.

2. The only way to get that faith, is by his Spirit in us, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Christ communicating his quickening Spirit unto the dead soul, it believes; and believing is united to Christ, and accepted in him. Wherefore breathe, pant, and long for the Spirit of Christ, Luke xi. 13.

I shall now drop a word very briefly to the last doctrine, and so conclude this subject.

Doct. III. ult. *Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.*

We shall consider, wherein it shines there. It shines,

1. In his admitting a Surety to mediate for the acceptance of sinners, when he might have insisted that the soul that sinned should die, Rom. v. 8. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* The necks of all the elect were on the block, and it was in the hand of spotless justice to reach them the fatal stroke. But glorious free grace admits a surety in their room.

2. He provided the Surety, John iii. 16. as he did the ram to come instead of Isaac lying bound on the altar. All the beasts of the field could not have afforded

afforded a sacrifice sufficient for the sinner's acceptance; nor the angels in heaven a cautioner: but glorious grace gave God's own Son, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* So the righteousness is the righteousness of God, not only of one who is God, but provided by God.

3. He demands nothing of us, to render us acceptable in whole or in part; but the cause of his accepting sinners is wholly without them, Rom. viii. 24. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.* To us it is in no wise, Give and get; but, Take and have, Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* So nothing in us has any hand in it, but faith, as the hand whereby it is received.

4. The very hand of faith, whereby it is received, is God's free gift, Eph. ii. 8. *For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* Phil. i. 29. That one believes while another doth not, is owing purely to free grace, which makes the difference; giving the quickening Spirit to one, that is not communicated to another.

5. In its breaking over all impediments lying in its way, such as these in the case of the Corinthians, to whom the apostle says, *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. 11. In the best of sinners, there is that loathsomeness and unworthiness found, that proclaims a glory of grace in their acceptance, Jer. iii. 19. *I said, How shall I put thee among the children?*

children? But in the worst of them there is nothing found but what glorious grace will break over, to accept them in Christ, as in Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul, &c.

6. In the thoroughness of the acceptance, If. i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* Acceptance among men is often coldrife, and by halves, so as the heart is not freely toward the pardoned offender. But God's acceptance of sinners in Christ, is perfect the first moment; they are perfectly beloved in him, John xvii. 21.

7. *Lastly,* In the perpetuity and constancy of it; sinners are so accepted in Christ, that they shall never be cast out of God's favour again, John x. 28. 29. *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* They are not put on their good behaviour, as to the acceptance of their persons with God, but it is secured unalterably in Christ. The smiles and frowns of a Father, will indeed be as they carry.

USE. 1. Let us loath Popery then, as the smoke of the bottomless pit darkening the glory of grace in the acceptance of sinners, by their merit of works, and other corrupt doctrines and practices, laying another foundation than Christ. It is evident, we are in danger of it; and it will be our wisdom, to be on our guard, that we be not catched napping, come what will.

2. Let all be encouraged to come to God through Christ for acceptance, assuring themselves they may have it through him, God being well pleased with him, and with every one who believes in him for life, pardon and acceptance.



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